

**SCORPIONS IN A BOTTLE:
DANGEROUS IDEAS ABOUT THE
UNITED STATES AND THE
SOVIET UNION**



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SCORPIONS IN A BOTTLE:

Dangerous Ideas About the United States and the
Soviet Union

Lissa Roche, Editor

Selected addresses from the Shavano Institute's
Conference on Moral Equivalence

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We, of course, and many Europeans, some of them in the press, some in parliament, some in the arts, speak of the "two superpowers" as if they were two far-off and equally dangerous giants; two, I think the imagery is, "scorpions in a bottle."

*Midge Decter
Executive Director
Committee for the Free World*

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Preface

In May of 1985, at the request of the US Department of State, the Shavano Institute for National Leadership, a division of Hillsdale College, sponsored a conference on "Moral Equivalence: False Images of US and Soviet Values" at the Madison Hotel, in Washington, DC. Forty-five participants from the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, Italy, Latin America, and Central Europe accepted the invitation to examine the issue of an alleged "moral equivalence" between the two "superpowers." Leading representatives of government, business, education, and the media were in attendance.

The general conclusion of the speakers was that the concept of moral equivalence is widely accepted despite the claims to the contrary. One example was offered repeatedly: Many Americans believe that the United States engages in amoral activity abroad and that it employs tactics which are as questionable as those used by the Soviets.

The attention that this conference has received has been substantial. Articles, both favorable and unfavorable, have appeared in dozens of national publications such as *Time*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *National Review*, *Policy Review*, the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, the *New York Post*, and the *New York Times* as well as in over 500 other newspapers throughout the nation.

From hundreds of pages of transcripts, these addresses have

been selected to present the reader with an overall view of the argument against accepting the tenets of moral equivalence theory.

One final note is necessary: In light of Hillsdale College's 142-year commitment to independence and continuing battles in the courts over its refusal to accept federal control, the Shavano Institute refused to accept any funds from the State Department for the cost of the conference or its publications. Grateful appreciation is extended toward the J.M. Foundation and the Olin Foundation for grants which helped to make both possible.

Lissa Roche
Editor

Foreword

The idea of moral equivalence is not new. In 1941, Joseph E. Davis, the US Ambassador to Russia from 1936–38, published his “memoir,” *Mission to Moscow*, which convinced thousands that Josef Stalin’s communist regime was as morally righteous and benevolent as our own democratic system. The book sold over 700,000 copies in the hardcover edition and was translated into thirteen languages before it was made into a Hollywood film. Today, nearly fifty years later, *Mission to Moscow* is regarded simply as an eccentric example of World War II Allied propaganda. No one suggests that it is a factual account of Ambassador Davies’s tour of duty in Russia, or that it accurately depicts the notorious Stalin (whom even the Politburo has, for the moment, forsaken).

But in 1984, the US Ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, coined the term “moral equivalence” to describe the notion common in more or less disguised forms today: that the two “superpowers,” the United States and the Soviet Union, whatever their professed values might be, behave so similarly in world affairs that it can be said that there is no moral difference between them.

In May of 1985, at the request of the US Department of State, the Shavano Institute of Hillsdale College convened a seminar to discuss “moral equivalence” and to determine how

prevalent this idea has become. Invitations went out to prominent representatives of every point of view, and we at Shavano expected to host a genuine debate over the issue. But, interestingly enough, the forty-five individuals who expressed a willingness to participate were, almost without exception, proponents of the view that moral equivalence is a false and widespread doctrine. Why was this the case? It may be because, as Tom Wolfe put it, such an event was dismissed as "gauche." Some of the critics of the conference have since denounced it as just another exercise in "liberal head-bashing," yet many of these critics elected not to attend the conference and to present papers. Others have claimed that moral equivalence is just a straw man and that no one aside from a few wild-eyed radicals seriously believes that the United States and the Soviet Union are morally equivalent.

But the conference participants are convinced that moral equivalence is the reasoning behind many public statements—like Senator Christopher Dodd's comment that our actions in Nicaragua were no better than the Russians' in Afghanistan; or the popular description of Afghanistan as the "Soviet Union's Vietnam;" or the message of the award-winning film, *The Killing Fields*, which implies that the United States, not the communist Khmer Rouge, was responsible for what John Chamberlain has called the "Cambodian holocaust."

The logic of moral equivalence flows from the flawed assumption that to be objective about foreign affairs, one must push aside rhetoric, national pride, and even patriotism, to discover . . . what? That all governments are basically alike; they seek to expand their own power base, security, and spheres of influence. Both the United States and the Soviet Union are suspected of indulging in secret, amoral power-plays in the Third World. The Soviets may be less subtle with their proxy armies and fabricated liberation fronts, but the United States is accused of allowing its multinational corporations to run roughshod over weak nations and of using economic aid as a bludgeon.

The debate over moral equivalence is important because it involves a larger problem confronting Western civilization: the erosion and "systematic redefinition of the terms of political

discourse." We in the West are losing the war of ideas when we let our language deteriorate. (It doesn't have to be actively subverted by communists. We are doing the job ourselves.) Our educational system no longer prepares people to defend their own values. Even when we may know instinctively what we believe, we are faced with changed meanings of words with which we were once familiar, and thus, as Melvin Lasky reminds us, crucial moral distinctions are lost. What do words like peace, detente, human rights—words which are important in the moral equivalence argument—mean anymore? It is the contention of these authors that they have become so politicized and narrowly defined that they are as much overt propaganda as *Mission to Moscow* was in 1941.

Are the United States and the Soviet Union morally equivalent? Has our language become so imprecise that we have lost the ability to make that kind of crucial moral distinction?

The individuals here speak for themselves, but please be reminded that this project represents only the *beginning* of the inquiry. These questions need to be examined thoroughly by scholars, diplomats, business leaders, politicians, and the broader American public. Let the opponents of the findings of the Shavano conference speak out, and we shall certainly reply—that is what we're in the idea business for—and that is the kind of open-ended investigation which we hope to encourage.

George Roche
President
Hillsdale College
March, 1986

A PRIMER ON MORAL EQUIVALENCE

Eleven Voices in the Rising Debate

We've tried to bring a new honesty and moral purposefulness to our foreign policy, to show we can be candid about the essential differences between ourselves and others while still pursuing peace initiatives with them. As I've said before, the democracies have their own serious injustices to deal with. But this should not prevent us from making the crucial moral distinctions between pluralist systems which acknowledge their own wrongs and shortcomings, and systems that excuse their defects in the name of totalitarian ideology. Our willingness to speak out on these distinctions is the moral center for our foreign policy. For us, human freedom is a first principle, not a bargaining chip. To fail to publicly enunciate the differences between totalitarian and democratic systems of government would be to forsake this moral high ground. Our new realism reestablishes the basis of that broad foreign policy consensus that existed in the pre-Vietnam era when we understood the moral imperatives of defending freedom and the importance of taking totalitarian powers seriously.

—Ronald Reagan (Eureka College, February 6, 1984)

Those who rule the Soviet Union are not about to give up a system that allows them to be nobles and kings. The people who rule the United States are not about to give up a capitalist system that allows them to live like dukes and barons and requires them to give only grudging concern to those who live in misery. No death in the Soviet Union or election in the United States is going to change this much.

—Carl Rowan (syndicated column, March 1985)
(Declining invitation to address the seminar)

Democratic civilization is the first in history to blame itself because another power is working to destroy it. The distinguishing mark of our century is not so much communism's determination to erase democracy from our planet, or its frequent success in pursuing that end, as it is the humility with which democracy not only consents to its own obliteration, but contrives to legitimize the victory of its deadliest enemy. It is natural for communism to try with all its might to eliminate democracy, since the two systems are incompatible and communism's survival depends on the annihilation of democracy. But it is less natural and more novel that the stricken civilization should not only be deeply convinced that it deserves to be defeated, but that it should regale its friends and foes with reasons why defending itself would be immoral and, in any event, superfluous, useless, even dangerous. Democracy is zealous in devising arguments to prove the justice of its adversary's case and to lengthen the already overwhelming list of its own inadequacies.

—Jean Francois Revel (*Commentary*, June 1984)

I don't, of course, make the ridiculous claim of "moral equivalence" between the US and the USSR, and I don't take seriously anyone who does. I do, however, think there are too many instances where we have abandoned what I think are sacred American standards of behavior and acted too much as if

we did not claim moral and political superiority. I make that claim, and think we should vindicate it by our moral and political behavior. The program as outlined suggests to me a steady barrage of speakers condemning Soviet behavior and praising that of the US. My own view is that we are too self-congratulatory already.

—Tom Wicker (Declining invitation to address the seminar)

Is there a significant moral difference between the democratic countries of the West and the communist countries of the Eastern bloc? Many, perhaps most, of the most influential treatments of East-West differences during the last decade or so propose tacitly, and sometimes explicitly, that the differences are not that great after all. It was argued that in fundamental moral respects the democracies and communist states were already much alike, a position that simultaneously denies the virtues of the democracies and the vices of the totalitarian systems of the East. If it is no longer possible to distinguish between freedom and despotism—the United States is a free society; between consent and violence, we are a society based on consent; between open and closed societies, we are an open society—then the erosion of the foundation of a distinctively Western democratic civilization is already far advanced and the situation is serious indeed.

—Jeane Kirkpatrick (London, April 9, 1984)

I would be glad to take part in a serious symposium devoted to the question of “moral equivalence,” but I stress: “serious symposium.” If I were invited by the Communist Party to take part in a symposium they were arranging on the topic, with all papers contributed by Party loyalists (including even people who refer to “the unfortunate accidental loss of life” and “unintended consequences of military action” when the Russian air force carries out saturation bombing in Afghanistan), the unimaginable idea that one might compare the peace-loving USSR with the evil empire, I would simply dismiss it without even a

reply, and would not dignify the proceedings by attending. I am afraid I will not be able to participate.

—Noam Chomsky (Declining invitation to address the seminar)

Ideas can become articles of fashion which are adopted with no more foundation than styles in clothing. I see this as the key to the intellectual history of the United States in the twentieth century. Since 1973, since *The Gulag Archipelago*, Marxism has been through as a spiritual force in the world. Marxism has never been a very powerful ideology in the United States. Instead, we have had a Marxist mist. There was always a Marxist mist over the next hill, a fuzzy glow by the light of which one could judge every solution that was tried in our particular form of democracy. But *The Gulag Archipelago*, with dramatic effectiveness, began to dispel that mist as the environment in which attacks on American democracy, particularly attacks from within the United States itself, could originate. No one any longer looks to Marxism in a religious way, as was done for years even by people who were not Marxists. The Left is now attempting to form behind an anti-business, anti-science, anti-nuclear banner. Socialism remains the goal, of course, but this is not a time in which anyone can present a socialist program by that name. But as these old forces regroup, what are going to be the counter-vailing forces?

—Tom Wolfe (*Imprimis*, January 1984)

The outlook for the free world is brighter today than it has been for some time past, not because of political or strategic factors, but because of the presence on the world scene of three extraordinary spiritual figures: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Malcolm Muggeridge, and John Paul II. Each of these giants understands that East-West struggle is fundamentally a struggle over the nature of man—is he a child of God, or merely the highest of the animals—and they are helping to focus the issue in these terms for the United States and its friends and allies?

President Reagan not only grasps this essential point, but he has the courage to come out and say so, as he showed in his “evil empire” remark to the Christian broadcasters’ convention.

—Frank Shakespeare (*Views from Shavano*,
March/April 1984)

Obviously, at this conference, you don’t want to discuss moral equivalence, you want to destroy whatever basis might exist for it. Thanks anyway. I’ve got other (I almost said better) things to do on those two days.

—William Sloane Coffin (Declining invitation to
address the seminar)

Part of the problem is Americans’ short historical memory, sometimes measured literally in months. Other traits in the inherent goodness of our national character seem to work against us as well. Americans are fair to a fault. We are determined to think the best of the other fellow. We are painfully earnest about acknowledging our own faults and reforming them. These impulses are laudable and healthy in themselves. But they can become almost suicidal when mixed with a strong dose of 20th-century secular religion—equal parts distrust of all moral and spiritual absolutes, exaltation of subjective opinion as an end in itself, utopian fantasies where the best becomes the enemy of the good, and selfish postponement of death at all costs. The result is our strange unwillingness to admit that “the evil empire” is exactly that, and our nagging worry that we might actually deserve the humiliation our enemies demand of us.

—John K. Andrews, Jr. (*Views from Shavano*, April 1985)

Ideas rule the world—not armies, not economics, not politics, not any of those other things to which we usually give our allegiance, but ideas. All those Napoleons and all the mighty of the earth are usually dancing to the tune provided by the dominant ideas of the leadership community in which they happen

to find themselves. Without the innermost knowledge that each of us has a responsibility to our Creator, without a government and an institutional structure which is responsive to allowing us to exercise that kind of self-responsibility, there can be no true civilization. That is why we oppose communism abroad. That is why we oppose collectivism at home. It is the erosion of that faith which today destroys us from within. I submit to you that unless we recover those moral and spiritual values, all the methods in the world to do something better economically, technologically, or socially are just so much spitting into the wind. The challenge before us is to start a revolution in moral understanding, a revolution to change the world.

—George Roche (Hillsdale College, May 14, 1983)

Contributors

Jeane Kirkpatrick

After more than four years as the United States representative to the United Nations and a member of the Cabinet, Jeane Kirkpatrick in late 1985 returned to Georgetown University as Leavey Professor and to the American Enterprise Institute as a senior fellow, positions which she held prior to serving in the first Reagan Administration.

A prolific writer and researcher, Ambassador Kirkpatrick is the author of five books, several monographs, and numerous articles on American political issues and foreign policy. Her books include: *The Reagan Phenomenon*, (1983); *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics*, (1982); *The New Presidential Elite*, (1976); *Political Woman*, (1974); *Leader and Vanguard in Mass Society: A Study of Peronist Argentina*, (1971); and *Dismantling the Parties: Reflections on Party Reform and Party Decomposition*, (1978).

Irving Kristol

Popularly regarded as one of the leading "neoconservative" intellectuals in America, Irving Kristol is the John M. Olin Professor of Social Thought at the NYU Graduate School of Business Administration, co-editor of *The Public Interest*, and publisher of the foreign policy quarterly, *The National Interest*. He is also a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and writes monthly for the *Wall Street Journal*.

Mr. Kristol's articles appear regularly in a number of journals and he is well known for his books: *Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the University*, with Daniel Bell (1969); *Capitalism Today*, with Daniel Bell (1971); *On the Democratic Idea in America* (1972); *The American Commonwealth*, with Nathan Glazer (1976); *The Americans: 1976*, with Paul Weaver (1976); *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (1978); *The Crisis in Economic Theory* (1981); and *Reflections of a Neoconservative* (1983).

Sidney Hook

Sidney Hook, currently a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, is also an emeritus professor of philosophy and former head of the All-University Department at New York University.

Recently honored by the White House and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Dr. Hook has also been designated Thomas Jefferson Lecturer by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the highest appointment in the social sciences. His published works include: *Education and the Taming of Power* (1973); *Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life* (1975); *Revolution, Reform and Social Justice* (1976); *Philosophy and Public Policy* (1980); and *Marxism and Beyond* (1983).

William Bennett

Formerly chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, William Bennett is currently US secretary of education. A lawyer and professor at a number of universities during his career, Dr. Bennett's areas of speciality are philosophy and law. He is co-author of *Counting by Race: Equality in American Thought from the Founding Fathers to Bakke* (1979) and has written articles for journals such as the *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, the *Stanford Law Review*, *Newsweek*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Commentary*.

Joseph Sobran

Joseph Sobran earned his degree in English literature at Eastern Michigan University before going on to become one of the youngest editors at *National Review* in 1972. He is currently senior editor at the magazine and is a regular contributor to *Human Life Review*. His articles have appeared in *Harper's*, the *New York Times*, *Center Journal*, *The American Spectator*, the *National Catholic Register*, and *Commonweal*. He recently published *Single Issues: Essays on the Crucial Social Questions*. He speaks frequently to college and public audiences on a variety of topics and can be heard weekly on the CBS radio program, *Spectrum*.

Melvin Lasky

Editor and publisher of London's *Encounter* magazine since 1958, the American-born Mr. Lasky appears frequently on European television and has lectured widely in Great Britain, Europe and the United States.

From 1941–43, he was literary editor of the *New Leader* in New York, and from 1948–58, he was editor of *Der Monat* in Berlin. Currently, he is the editor and publisher of two publishing houses as well as *Encounter*: Library Press (New York) and Alcover Press (London). He is the author of *Africa for Beginners: A Traveler's Notebook* (1962); *Utopia and Revolution* (1976); and editor of *The Hungarian Revolution: A White Book* (1957, 1970).

Peter Berger

Peter Berger is a professor at Boston University where he teaches in a number of departments and serves as director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture. From 1981–83, Dr. Berger was a US representative to the United Nations Working Group on the Right to Development. He is the author of *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective* (1963); *The Social Construction of Reality*, with Thomas Luckmann (1966); *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967); *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (1969); *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, with Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner (1973); *Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change* (1975); *The Heretical Imperative* (1979); *Sociology Reinterpreted*, with Hansfried Kellner (1981); and *The War Over the Family*, with Brigitte Berger (1983).

Michael Novak

Writer, scholar and activist, Michael Novak holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC. In 1981 and 1982, he was appointed by President Reagan as the chief representative of the US Delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

Mr. Novak writes a syndicated column and his articles appear frequently in major magazines. He is also the author of nearly twenty influential books in the areas of philosophy, theology, and culture, including *The Open Church* (1964); *Belief and Unbelief* (1965); *A Theology for Radical Politics* (1969); *The Experience of Nothingness* (1970); *Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove* (1971); *A Book of Elements*, with Karen Laub-Novak (1972); *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (1972); *Choosing Our King* (1974); *The Joy of Sports* (1976); *The Guns of Lattimer* (1978); *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982); *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age*

(1983); *Confession of a Catholic* (1983); *Freedom With Justice* (1984); and, together with the Lay Commission on Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy, *Toward the Future: Catholic Social Thought and the US Economy* (1984). His works of fiction include *The Tiber Was Silver* (1961) and *Naked I Leave* (1970).

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JEANE KIRKPATRICK

The Myth of Moral Equivalence

Harold Lasswell, a rather unlikely source for an argument against the doctrine of moral equivalence, said in his book, *World Politics and Personal Insecurity*:

The object of revolution, like war, is to attain coercive pre-dominance over the enemy as a means of working one's will with him. Revolutionary propaganda selects symbols which are calculated to detach the affections of the masses from the existing symbols of authority and to attach their affections to challenging symbols and to direct hostilities toward existing symbols of authority.

He went on to say that constituted authorities perpetuate themselves by shaping the conscience of those who fall within their sphere of control. Hence, great revolutions are always deep ruptures of conscience. We are living today in a revolutionary era in which the force which purports to be the great world revolution of our times, Marxist/Leninism, seeks, by a variety of means, including skillful semantic manipulations, to extend its own hegemony.

The Soviets have made extraordinarily great progress in extending their own influence and projecting their own semantic rules upon the rest of the world. There was a time when an educated person found it persuasive to see important differ-

ences between the conceptions of civilization embodied, for example, in the US Constitution or the British Constitution or the United Nations Charter, on the one hand, and the conception of civilization embodied in the theory and practice of the Soviet Constitution in any of its multiple mutations, on the other. And the conception of a bipolar political world has been similarly replaced by a prevalent worldview which rests on the belief that the world is in the grip of a contest between two superpowers. These superpowers contend for dominance and resemble one another in key respects. This image of moral and political symmetry has gained a wide acceptance not only in the Third World, but also among our allies and ourselves. Of my own statements about the false nature of this image, a colleague has said, "She talks about the moral differences between the superpowers, and when we fail to find any moral difference between Afghanistan and Grenada she makes it clear that we are dim-witted." I believe that anyone who fails to see a difference between Grenada and Afghanistan is not only seriously mistaken but very seriously confused, and that their confusion is a direct consequence of the Soviets' colossally effective assault on the realms of value and meaning which our civilization holds dear.

That assault has, it must be underscored, had many successes. In the speech which I delivered at Chatham House in London in 1984 on moral equivalence, the question was, "Is there a moral difference between the superpowers?" I quoted a number of English commentators on the United States and I did not name them. That was a demonstration of both restraint and diplomacy on my part. While a *Washington Post* columnist suggested that I had outdone myself in finding esoteric figures to quote to make my point, I can assure you that the persons whom I quoted were anything but esoteric. They are leading representatives of the major parties of our perhaps closest friend and ally, the United Kingdom. One of those persons, who will remain nameless here (I called him simply, an MP), asserted that there was an uncanny resemblance between the superpowers. Another charged that if governments assign to themselves

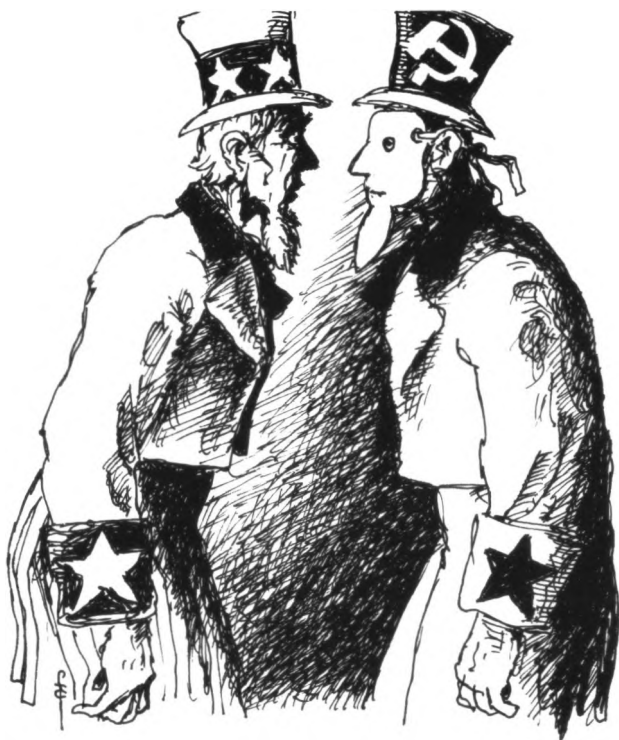
the right to change the governments of other sovereign states, there can be no peace in this world and that this is perhaps the most dangerous age which the human race has ever known. And, he said, it is quite improper for honorable members to condemn, as we have, the violation of international law by the Soviet Union in its attack on Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan if we do not apply the same standards to the United States' attack on Grenada. In a recent debate at Oxford our Secretary of Defense barely won. He squeaked through to a victory on the question of whether there is a moral difference between the superpowers. In another debate Congressman Newt Gingrich, comporting himself brilliantly, lost on the question of whether US policy in Central America was consistent with the moral values and traditions of Western civilization. He lost that debate, of course, to a Nicaraguan government official.

To destroy a society it is first necessary to delegitimize its basic institutions so as to detach the identifications and affections of its citizens from the institutions and authorities of the society marked for destruction. This delegitimization may be achieved by attacking a society's practices in terms of its own deeply held values, or it may be achieved by attacking the values themselves. The latter course was undertaken by the fascists and Nazi movements which rejected outright the basic values of Western liberal democratic civilization. They rejected democracy, liberty, equality, and forthrightly, frankly, embraced principles of leadership, obedience and hierarchy as alternatives to the hated basic values of democracy. Unlike the fascists, Marxists, of course, do not attack our basic values forthrightly. Instead, they denounce our societies in terms of our own values. They do not postulate alternative values; they postulate a radical critique of our societies and institutions by expropriating our language, our values. Thus democracies are attacked as not truly democratic, because they cannot guarantee economic equality. The argument follows that this makes political equality impossible and in the absence of political equality, it has been asserted that there cannot be free elections or freedom of any sort. Or the absence of perfect political equality in an electoral

system means that the elections are a fraud. Their point is that a regime whose practices systematically betray their basic values is obviously a failed regime. If our practices betray our own deepest values then we fail; we are a failed regime. If we pretend to hallow values which our practices do not perfectly achieve, then we are guilty of falsification. So we are both a failure and a fraud. Obviously, such a regime does not deserve the loyalty or affection of either its citizens or its friends. Thus, if the United States is a fraudulent, falsifying society which exploits its workers and subjugates all in a facade of democracy, then it is obviously not worthy of respect.

The Soviet assault on liberal democratic legitimacy involves a very complex, comprehensive, multifaceted strategy. First, it involves a demonstration of the failure of Western democracies to meet their own standards which are regarded as utopian measuring rods. Second, it proceeds by continuous falsification of Soviet practices and assertions of Soviet loyalty to basic Western values. At the same time that it is suggested that we do not respect our own values, it is claimed by the Soviets that they do. Our flaws are exaggerated, theirs are simply denied. Third, the conclusion is, of course, inexorably arrived at, that there is, at best, not a dime's worth of difference between these two regimes.

Marxism incorporates, at the verbal level and the intellectual level, the values of liberal democracy in its assault on liberal democracy and this is precisely why it entraps so many Western intellectuals who are themselves serious liberal democrats. Thus the slightest restriction on, let's say, the presumption of innocence of the accused is said to demonstrate the absence of the rule of law. The slightest failure of an electoral system demonstrates contempt for political equality. Any use of force in international affairs establishes the lawless character of the society. Now, it is a short step from having demonstrated that a country like the United States is not a law-abiding society to demonstrating that it is lost and that it is like any other lawless society. The Soviets can always claim "We are no worse than you. Even if we are a lawless society, you too are a lawless so-



ciety, we are no worse than you." This is the "logic" of the doctrine of moral equivalence. If practices are measured by abstract, absolute standards, practices are always found wanting. The communists who criticize liberal democratic societies measure our practices by our standards and deny the relevance of their practices to judgments concerning the moral worth of our own society.

An alliance among democracies is based on shared ideals. The process of delegitimization is, therefore, an absolutely ideal instrument for undermining an alliance, as well as for undermining a government. The NATO alliance among democracies simply cannot survive a widespread conviction among its members that there is no difference between the superpowers. It is not necessary to demonstrate that the Soviet Union is flawed,

or deplorable. To destroy the alliance, it is only necessary to deprive the citizens of democratic societies of a sense of shared moral purpose which underlies common identifications and common efforts.

The goal posts have been moved: When America is under discussion, it is legitimate to go back a 100 years to look for dirt; when the Soviet Union is mentioned, it is wrong to look back 30 years.

Owen Harries

Editor, The National Interest

When our democratic allies can see no difference between American and Soviet behavior, then obviously there is no moral basis for a continuing association. There may be grounds in wartime under extreme duress for democracies to ally themselves with countries which are morally reprehensible, but there cannot be, for democracies, adequate justification for long-range peacetime association. It's perfectly clear that the tendency to self-debasement, self-denigration which has been so brilliantly commented upon by the French scholar Jean-Francois Revel and others recently is rooted in this practice of measuring Western democratic societies by utopian standards. There is simply no way that such measurements can result in anything but chronic, continuous self-debasement, self-criticism, and finally, self-disgust. The problem of dealing with this is complicated by the fact that the values in question are our own values. The response, of course, must be that it is not appropriate to judge actual social practices by utopian standards of political values. So, we must simultaneously affirm our values and accept their relevance to our practice while denying that they are the measuring rods that the Soviets claim they are. That is the challenge which confronts us, and is by no means an easy one.

Another major dimension of the Soviet assault on our values takes place through the systematic redefinition of the terms of political discourse. George Orwell, as usual, has said it very well in his Epilogue to *1984*. He said the purpose of "Newspeak"

was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to devotees of "Ingsoc," but to make all other modes of thought impossible. A heretical thought would literally be unthinkable so far as it is dependent on words. The systematic redefinition of terms of political discourse is very far advanced, making it very difficult to think thoughts other than those indicated by the definition. In real life, nowhere is this clearer than in the concept of human rights. Human rights, enshrined as the purpose of the United Nations Charter and at the heart of the American and Western democratic tradition, have been redefined in contemporary international discourse and utilized by the great human rights organizations in their new definitions.

According to their new definitions, human rights violations are failures of governments, vis-a-vis their citizens. Terrorist groups do not violate human rights in the current vernacular; only governments violate human rights. Thus the government



of El Salvador is continually attacked for gross violations of human rights in responding to terrorist assault. Guerillas are not attacked for violations of human rights, although they may massacre half of the inhabitants of a hamlet, dragging them from their beds in the middle of the night. That is not a violation of human rights by definition: That is a protest of a national liberation movement. The guerillas, by definition, are a national liberation movement. National liberation movements do not violate human rights. They have their human rights violated. National liberation movements assault societies and when governments respond, they (the governments) are criticized vigorously as repressive and unethical. I once encountered in a public presentation the assertion from an earnest young man that the government of El Salvador was guilty of the murder of 50,000, and this was proof, obviously, of gross violations of human rights and a sufficient demonstration that the government of El Salvador was unworthy of US support. The fact is, of course, that approximately 50,000 people have died in El Salvador as a consequence of a guerilla war. But the government is simultaneously held responsible for maintaining order, protecting its citizens, and for responding to violence, so it is responsible for *all* the deaths in the society.

The semantics of human rights and national liberation movements are extraordinary. It is necessary only to look at the sober discussions of human rights in such places as the Amnesty International Reports or the Helsinki Watch discussions to see that those organizations and most of the people who discuss the subject today are using skewed vocabulary which guarantees the outcome of the investigation by definition. The "newspeak" of human rights morally invalidates the governments by definition and morally exculpates the guerillas by definition. The theft of words like genocide and the language which appears in documents like the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Convention are other examples of systematic comprehensive effort at semantic rectification.

In the United Nations, of course, genocide is regularly charged against Israel and only Israel is regularly described as violating

the Geneva Convention. Along with the terms go the documents in which the values are enshrined and codified. What further complicates this is the effort not only to redefine values but to eliminate any epistemological standard—any standard of proof—by which events might be objectively observed and through which we might have appeal to the double bind in which the semantic falsification puts us. Totalitarian ideologies, including Marxism, are inevitably, invariably, antiempirical. Not only do they deny that there is any sort of objective truth, they deny effectively empirical verification and procedures of empirical verification because they make truth, and not only truth, but reality, dependent on power relations, *i.e.*, truth and objective reality are ultimately defined in a totalitarian ideology by those people who hold power. There is an elaborate ideological justification for this, according to which only Marxists are capable of seeing through the layers of obfuscation with which the existing exploiting powers have shrouded reality. Only the bearers of the totalitarian ideology have the capacity to de-mystify and define reality.

The totalitarian ideology, of which Marxism is the supreme example in our times, makes truth a function of power which is finally enforced by terror. Truth and reality are continually readjusted to serve the purposes of power at any given time. This is the reason that in 1984, history is continually re-written. It isn't just re-written once; it's re-written on a daily basis. And it is re-written from week to week and year to year to fit the requirements of the moment. Words, relationships, and events are redefined, and reality becomes a sub-category of politics. There is, then, no appeal from the arbitrary definitions of the revolutionary ideology. The redefinition of reality in the United Nations is dramatic. The first and most memorable examples which I witnessed were the attacks (they are annual, I later discovered) of Andrei Gromyko on the United States for intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and for destroying the possibilities for peace in Afghanistan. While that charge might not be too serious if it were uttered by someone in a position of less influence and power than Andrei Gromyko, it

is very serious indeed when it is backed by the full power, in an organization like the United Nations, of the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc. The charge that the United States is guilty of preventing peace in Afghanistan has now become a part of the negotiating position of the Soviet Union in which they suggest that the principle obstacle to the pacification of Afghanistan is American support for resistance forces in Afghanistan. That is an argument which one can hear in the United Nations any time the question of Afghanistan is discussed. It is an argument which representatives of the mediators come and whisper quietly to us at the US Mission or the State Department: Couldn't we try harder to understand that perhaps the biggest obstacle for peace is American support for the resistance movement?

Conceptions of reality are continually manipulated as part of the process of redefinition. There are many examples, but none more blatant than in the case of Nicaragua where the first symbolic redefinition/theft took place in the appropriation of the name of Augusto Sandino. Actually, Sandino was a nationalist and a patriot who was explicitly hostile to communism and who broke with the Salvadoran communist leadership precisely on grounds that the communists could betray the nationalist character of the revolution that Sandino stood for. There is a colossal theft and redefinition in the very name Sandinista. It matters because the name of Sandino has great prestige; he is a great national symbol in Nicaragua, a symbol of independence. It is a theft which both falsifies and confuses—confuses the Nicaraguans initially and confuses international observers about whether this government is nationalist, the bearer of authentic nationalist aspirations, or whether it is something else.

Semantic obfuscation in Nicaragua also proceeds apace with regard to the Catholic Church. The Nicaraguan government is probably the first to attempt, systematically, to incorporate the symbols of Christianity into a comprehensive fashion into state ideology. The establishment of a "popular church," a so-called parallel to the Catholic Church, is but one artifact of that effort to incorporate the symbols of Christianity. Most of the major

rallies in Nicaragua today include the symbol of a soldier with his arms outstretched. It is a novel attempt to identify the Sandinista revolution with the cross. Christ is depicted on the cross and in the background there is a sort of shadow with its arms outstretched in the form of a cross. He is a guerilla with a rifle.

Along with this kind of redefinition, falsification, and utopianism goes something and that is a simply colossal historical denial, especially on the part of the Russians. Their systematic continuous denial of their own history and practices is epitomized by their denial of the Ukrainian famine, which was denied for decades successfully and is still denied today. The Ukrainian famine is a non-event in the view of Soviet interpreters of reality. But not only is the Ukrainian famine a non-event like the infamous Katyn massacre in 1939, but the current shipment of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador is a non-event as well. The experience of confronting a spokesman for the Nicaraguan government in a public arena and listening to him deny that the Nicaraguan government is engaged in the shipment and trans-shipment of arms in a deliberate attempt to destabilize the government of El Salvador is simply an extraordinary experience.

States are like so many billiard balls—the analogy is often used—which act and interact according to what might be called the laws of political physics, determined by self-interest and power. What is inside the billiard balls is irrelevant. This approach has the great attraction of appearing scientific and objective. It leads to the conclusion that the introduction of moral distinctions is simply moralizing or propagandizing.

Owen Harries

Editor, The National Interest

There is no more misleading concept abroad today than the concept of superpower rivalry and the concept of superpower equivalence. The concept of superpower rivalry is the first premise in a syllogism in which moral equivalence is the conclusion. Once you view the United States and the Soviet Union

as contending for the world, you have already suggested a symmetry between their goals: to dominate the world.

The fact is, of course, that we do not seek to dominate the world. We do not seek colonies. We do, in fact, seek to foster a world of independent nations. But whenever anyone suggests that the world is dominated by superpower rivalries, they imply that we have some goal other than fostering and preserving a world of independent nations. Otherwise the concept of superpower rivalry makes no sense. But if there is only one power which seeks to undermine and subvert the independence of nations, then there is no question of superpower rivalry, and there isn't even a question of a contest between the United States and that imperialistic power. There is a contest between the imperialistic power and all other countries who desire to preserve their independence.

The very notion of superpower rivalry undermines, at the epistemological level as well as the political level, the notion of a serious distinction between the US and the USSR and also undermines the reality of the opposition of Soviet goals to the goals of all independent nations and the desires of all independent nations. It is very important to understand that not only are questions of politics involved here, but also the most basic questions of morality and meaning. In a very interesting little book, *Ethics of Rhetoric*, Richard Weaver said, "It is the nature of the conscious life of man to revolve around some concept of value." So true is this, Weaver added, that where the concept is withdrawn, the human being suffers an almost intolerable sense of loss. As our lives revolve around values, they also revolve around meaning and epistemological stability. We must recognize and defend a concept of meaning to which the concept of value is, of course, absolutely essential: a concept of epistemological stability, if you will, a concept of reality which is not, in fact, a function of power and does not shift from day to day to fit the political needs of a totalitarian group.

Irving Kristol

The Twisted Vocabulary of Superpower Symmetry

It is clear that we do have a problem of semantic infiltration. That is to say, words suddenly have acquired the most peculiar connotations and significance. Take the word "peace," for instance. About a year ago, my wife and I were at a conference discussing foreign policy and as we left, she turned to me and said, "You know, I think peace has become a Stalinist word." And of course, she's absolutely right. I suddenly realized that the word "peace" in its current form entered the American political vocabulary in the 1930s. That is when the Communist Party helped to found non-pacifist organizations, many of which still exist, in which the word "peace" was featured in the title.

Prior to the 1930s, if you saw the word "peace," either you were dealing with a pacifist organization or you were dealing with some international legal organization that genuinely believed in world peace under the rule of law. The phrase "world peace" has vanished, but when you see the single word "peace" on a letterhead today, four times out of five you know what kind of organization it is: an organization that is in favor of *our* being peaceful. No one, of course, dares come out and speak against the use of the word "peace," thus we have a Peace Corps—not a Civil Conservation Corps which would have made more sense. We also have a Peace Academy in which, to paraphrase

George Orwell, we can study how to lose a war before we enter it—a piece of absolute idiocy which Congress passed and which Ronald Reagan, not wanting to seem to be against Peace, with a capital, “P,” signed.

Other words like *détente* have acquired new meanings. How could anyone be against *détente*? But these days you have to be against “*détente*.” Just as you have to be against “peace.” *Détente* does not mean what it used to mean—an agreement between two powers to avoid hostile actions toward one another. Now it means that only the U.S. must avoid hostile actions and, in addition, avoid making hostile statements.

And how about “community activist?” If you read the obituary of a lady who was identified as a community activist, you can be certain she did not spend the last 10 years actively advocating school prayer.

Words have been corrupted. You’ve heard a lot of analysis as to how and why it has happened, but let me make one flat statement: I don’t blame the Soviets for this at all. I don’t blame the Soviets for their propaganda. It is pointless to do so. Their propaganda does not succeed because it is so clever or subtle. Their propaganda is terrible. People believe Soviet propaganda because they want to believe it.

How did it all happen? Well, I could go into a long, or at least medium-sized, lecture on intellectual history which would be very boring. But even though I’m a professor, I don’t believe in boring people. Let me say that I think it is perfectly appropriate to be detached, or to try to be detached, in surveying and analyzing politics and international affairs. There is nothing wrong with that—so long as one’s theoretical detachment does not diminish one’s loyalty to one’s political community. Socrates was very detached about the political system of Athens and about Athens’ foreign policy, but he did fight in Athen’s wars and, according to all the reports, he fought very well and did not complain about it. He understood that while intellectuals and philosophers can speculate in a detached way as if they were not citizens of a particular community, in the real world one is always a citizen of a particular community.

In my lifetime, people have begun to blur the distinction between speculative abstractions and reality. They have begun to believe that, not only can one speculate as if he were a world citizen, but that one should think as if he were world citizen, and that government should carry out policies based on the assumption that we all are likely to become world citizens.

Woodrow Wilson popularized the notion that the world could develop into a world community, namely a community of nations governed by law not conflict. It is a utopian notion with a long pedigree. It is also, of course, not an unworthy one, but for the first time, with Woodrow Wilson, it became a matter of policy for a major government.

This kind of thinking has had 70 years to penetrate our government, our diplomatic service, our academies, and our media. Whole groups of people scattered throughout all of these key professions sometimes engage in discussions of practical policy as if they were citizens of another planet. It is utopianism, whether it be liberal utopianism or radical utopianism, that is the enemy. Imagine a president saying to the American public "Of course I want peace. Obviously, I want other things along with peace. I want other things sometimes in preference to peace. Clearly I cannot give you a world without war. That is a myth. There'll never be a world without war." Well, can you see the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* the next day: "The President says world must have war."

There are all sorts of consequences that flow from this conception. For one thing, we now have a great many diplomats who are trained to go abroad to represent the United States and who really have no conception of America's interests, who do not feel comfortable speaking up for those interests in a rather blunt and, if necessary, uncivil way. They identify with a much "larger" goal—world peace, world order, world harmony—and have no clear cut, hard-edged definition of American interests. I certainly don't wish to cast aspersions on the entire foreign service, but an awful lot of our diplomats have been bred in the Wilsonian tradition. This is especially the case because, these days, in order to get into the foreign service, you have to have

studied "international relations." Now it is very difficult to convey to anyone who has not looked at textbooks on international relations what they are like, and if I were to try to describe them to you in detail you would simply scoff. It is not that they are pro-Left. Most of them are not. But they are certainly not pro-American. They are not pro-anything. They are written by academics who want international relations to be a science. In order to be a science, it has to be value-free. Their model is economics and, therefore, they will talk about great powers, small powers, and middle-sized powers as they collide with one another and seek to achieve equilibrium—a concept also borrowed from economics but which is not a concept applicable to the real world. It is an ideal concept and all economists know that the real economic universe is never in equilibrium. If it were, all economic activity would come to a halt. But the alleged virtues of the non-judgmental approach to foreign policy is instilled into students who study what is called international relations. This would not be so bad if these were not students being trained to make foreign policy. If they merely went back to the Forum like Socrates, to hold conversations of a speculative and abstract character, it would be fine. They could speak of nations coming and going and, in a detached way, they could muse and speculate upon the way national entities collide with one another, cooperate with one another, betray one another. But when we use this approach to train young people who are going to be involved in the making of foreign policy, they are given no sense that their task is to represent their own political community. And, of course, they are bemused—as you will find in any international relations textbook—by what we might call "symmetries."

All great powers are alike, it is true—in some respects. In some respects, all great powers behave alike. If you look at the world scene abstracted from the concrete political and moral reality, one could say there is an analogy between the United States' actions in Grenada and the Soviet Union's in Afghanistan—if there is a concept of "aggression" that is sufficiently abstract. But, of course, it really wasn't until 50 years ago that

anyone ever accepted such a concept of "aggression," referring simply to the fact that one country has moved across another country's borders. The morality of preventive wars, under certain circumstances, was an accepted fact of political theory up until Woodrow Wilson came along and said it wasn't.

You can always look for such symmetries and you can always find them if you empty them of political and moral content. Emptying them of moral content also means emptying them of personal commitment.

This same attitude affects not only our diplomats and our professors of international relations; it most certainly and obviously affects our media. It was fascinating to watch the fuss that occurred in Lebanon when the Israelis shelled a major American network's cameramen. It is quite clear that journalists now believe that, when they walk onto a battlefield, the shooting should stop. Today's journalists feel that not only are they in the position of the Red Cross, but they are in a position superior to the Red Cross. Many journalists consider themselves to be above "choosing sides," and therefore, when they move into the firing line, the world should stop shooting.

The problem of moral equivalence is to be placed in the broader framework of this universal and permanent illusion, namely that "them" and "us" belong to the same world, both share the same values; they have their problems as we have our own. And dialogue, personal contacts, summits, and trades, will progressively soothe and heal this basically artificial division, this meaningless misunderstanding between us.

*Alain Besancon
Sovietologist, Paris*

It is difficult to describe, except in these few instances which I have mentioned, the way the old liberal internationalism and its utopian conception of a world order has affected the way in which we construct and judge our foreign policies. How this is trickled down through the legal profession and the academic

profession, into politics and into journalism still bedevils us today. What makes the matter so much worse is that we have a confluence here of another stream of thought provided by what Lionel Trilling has called the "Adversary Culture." That is to say, all of these educated people tend to be educated in a way which does not encourage them to think well of their own society. All the novels they read, films they see, on the whole, make them look down upon a bourgeois capitalist society. The consequence is that they believe they should be able to detach themselves from their loyalties to their political community. Even when they don't like their own political community, they don't necessarily have to like the "other" community, the Soviets, for example. A lot of these people are not really pro-Soviet; they just dislike the American community. The community they do like happens not to exist. It is in the future. That is the one they are loyal to. That is the standard by which they judge their own community. They are *not* biased. It is like saying a left-handed person is biased—that's the way they were constructed. That's the way they see the world.

What can we do about this problem? It is rooted in the corruption of our language, the corruption of our basic loyalty to our own political community by people who write about public policy and especially about foreign policy. Inventing a new ideological language would be hopeless. It would be far better to try to restore some of the older, simpler language that has not yet been corrupted. The word "peace" has been corrupted. The word "war" has not yet been corrupted; therefore, I've long believed that we would be making great progress if we changed the name of the Defense Department back to the War Department, so that the military staffs would know what they are doing. The Department's function is to fight and win wars, which we will always, intermittently, be engaged in. That is the premise that one must accept. Who knows what "national defense" is? Is it national defense if we intervene abroad to prevent a communist coup? It is impossible to put any serious policy meaning into a vague and essentially isolationist concept. We would solve that problem if we renamed the Defense Department the War

Department and we said: "We're going to get into wars, for better or worse, wisely or foolishly. Your job is to win them." It would be a great improvement upon the present situation.

The same thing would be true with another term I want to abolish: "national security." It is a bad term. What is for and what is against our national security? How the devil can anybody tell? National security is like personal security in the sense that the world can be going to hell all around us and our national security could be in pretty good shape, temporarily. But that's not what most of us mean when we talk about national security.

We can take words that have been degraded and restore them to their pristine purity. We've already done that with "capitalism." One of the most interesting phenomena over the past 15 years has been the recovery of the word capitalism. Once it was a word used primarily by socialists. It was, in fact, invented by socialists, and only for the purposes of denigration. No one went around saying, "I am a defender of capitalism." Now, people do go around speaking well of capitalism, actually using that word. Sometimes you can take a word that has been debased and restore it—but it has to be a truly hostile word. I mean, you can't do it as easily with words like "peace," it has to be a real mean word you adopt as your own. One of these days, I hope to see the word "imperialism" revived. It will take a while. I believe, on the whole, that imperialism has been a fact of civilization for most of the world's history. And certainly if it is our imperialism, I have a more benign view of it than I would of others'.

What do we do about the word "democracy"? What do you do about the "German Democratic Republic," i.e., East Germany? Well, I've a suggestion to make. I think that our State Department should be instructed, and our mission at the United Nations should be instructed, that every time they use that word in their official documents they should put the word "Democratic" in quotation marks. Now, this would cause some interesting repercussions. My guess is that the East German government would return all those documents saying, "Address them

properly." And we would say, "We are addressing them properly." Suddenly, the whole fight would be over their pre-emption of the word "democracy." That we have permitted them to steal that term is not to despair of ever rescuing it. The Peoples' Republic of China ought to be challenged on similar grounds. We should not simply accept their official language.

And I do not think we ought to talk about democracy as glibly as we do. We must talk about those components of democracy as we understand it. So when people say, "What are you doing? What kind of government would you want in Nicaragua or El Salvador?" we can reply. The communists say they want real democracy, but I would argue publicly that we want *really real* democracy. We want government by consent, which means elections, and government by the rule of law, which proscribes the exercise of arbitrary power.

We also have to learn to talk more candidly about our allies. Allies are not necessarily friends. And one of the great fallacies of American foreign policy has always been to assume that an ally must be regarded as a friend. We went to war in 1941 bent on "making friends" with the Soviet Union. Every time we establish good relations with a government we claim we have "friendly relations." They need not be friendly; they can be merely good relations. Yugoslavia is an ally of sorts. It is not a friend. South Africa may be an ally, but certainly is not a friend. That kind of sharp distinction can only be made by heads of state and by governments who have to be conscious of the corruption of thought behind the corruption of language.

Above all, we must revise or attack the utopian impulse which is, I repeat, the main source of all evil in the world. The reason there is such a thing as a Left in the world today is because of political utopianism. It is not because things are so bad in the existing order. We have a Left even when things are not so bad, and sometimes the Left gets stronger even as things get better. We have a Left because of that impulse of political utopianism which insists that the present is always radically deficient in comparison with an "achievable future." We must attack that impulse—which also, incidentally, inspires the extreme Right.

We must get ourselves, our governments, and our educators to understand that the world is organized into political communities and between these political communities there will always be conflict. However, in order to say these things, we have to disengage ourselves intellectually and institutionally from all sorts of commitments that were entered into under our own addiction to political utopianism in the guise of Wilsonian internationalism.

And if we are going to start speaking realistically about the world, and if we are going to start speaking candidly about our own foreign policy and other people's foreign policies, we will be compelled to quit the United Nations. No one can speak candidly at the United Nations. The United Nations is an institution that exists precisely so no one can speak candidly. It is based on the pretense that there is such a thing as a world community that there exists such a thing as a world order, and that all the nations involved in the United Nations are loyal to this world community and world order. Were we to speak and act candidly in the United Nations, we would be regarded as obstructionists and belligerents. We can have very good relations with all UN countries on a bilateral basis. The United Nations is a millstone around our neck in terms of educating the American people about the realities of the world in which the United States as a power has to operate.

I also wouldn't mind rethinking the mission of the United States Information Agency. I say this at the risk of offending some friends of mine who work there, but too often it is an organization that goes around the world apologizing, in effect, for the United States. It feels compelled to explain that we are not barbarians—that we do have concerts, that we have wonderful ballets, and therefore, the world should think better of us.

I do not believe that the USIA has a viable mission in combating anti-Americanism. If people want to be anti-American, let them be anti-American. Why the hell should we care? I don't care, and the average American doesn't care, if some German poet is anti-American. We should not go around the world sing-

ing, "Like me, like me, please like me." There's no reason why they should like us. The world is a varied place. Perhaps some people don't want Coca Cola or McDonald's. That's their problem. Anti-Americanism is not an issue that I think we should address. The real issue is whether these countries have a mutuality of interest with the United States and, as a result of these mutualities of interest, do they wish to be allied with the United States, or do they wish to be neutral, or do they wish to be somewhere in-between? That is all we should care about. If they like the United States, that is fine. If they don't like the United States, well, I hope they like their own countries. That is all right too. There is nothing wrong with that.

The American people, at the moment, have a great deal of confidence in their own society and I believe that, over time, this confidence will find expression in a very vigorous foreign policy. And the question we should be always asking the rest of the world is, "Would you like to come along?" I think we will then find that relations with all nations, democratic or otherwise, will be much, much healthier when built on the basis of plain-speaking and plain-acting.

Sidney Hook

Between Democracy and Despotism

Those of us who for decades have been contesting the doctrine of the moral equivalence between the Soviet Union and the United States—the protagonists of the free open societies of the world—have invariably been accused by neutralists, New Leftists, and ritualistic liberals, of glorifying the status quo. This retort is invariably made despite the long and public record of our criticism of American domestic and foreign policy. The strategy behind this retort is to throw us on the defensive and to transform the discussion into a competition to establish who has criticized American evils most. Were the rejoinder to us made in good faith, it would be sufficient to point out that, strictly speaking, in our world of rapid social and technological change, there is no such thing as the status quo, that the implementation of any human policy, including the policy of inaction, always affects the status quo. Any objective assessment of this record, told in part by a book like Ben Wattenberg's *The Real America*, shows, on the whole, an encouraging advance both in the standards of life and in freedom of thought in American society.

With respect to domestic life in the United States, any attempt to insinuate that its defects and insufficiencies—revealed by our criticisms—make our indictment of communist repression and Soviet imperialism morally invalid is made in bad faith. For even if one were to grant legitimacy to the litany of criticisms of American domestic and foreign policy, and many of

the policies *are* highly questionable, the very fact that the exercise of the right to criticize is institutionalized in our democratic system by a whole cluster of other rights makes all the difference in the world between the free society and one in which serious criticism is proscribed. Dissent is integral to every system of government based on the consent of the governed. No communist regime anywhere in the world is based on the freely given consent of the peoples imprisoned within its borders. The failure to recognize this crucial difference between the US and the USSR exposes the real animus behind the doctrine of moral equivalence. For there are no evils in our domestic policy that cannot be redressed, no directives in our foreign policy that cannot be altered through the democratic process. This is true of the most difficult and stubborn of our domestic problems. And although there is certainly no ground for complacency in the record of our past failures, there is even less ground for despair.

At the end of World War II both the Soviet Union and the Western allies claimed to liberate continental Europe from the Nazi oppression. Is there anyone who doesn't know the results of this liberation in say, Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, or in East and West Germany?

I believe it was Winston Churchill who once said that there is no difference between good and evil from a purely objective standpoint. Surely a gangster and a policeman are quite similar in a certain way. Both are pretty tough and by no means nice guys. Both can kill and occasionally do. And besides, we have to spend public money on both of them. Yet for some reason, we prefer to have one of them safely locked up while another patrols the streets.

*Vladimir Bukovsky
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Ambassador Kirkpatrick, in her address before the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London in April of 1984, dealt with the bizarre judgments of some of our European allies

who drew a moral equation between the standards of the US and the USSR in international affairs. In their case, it seems evident that fear and proximity to the Soviet Union account for distorted judgment. But it is astonishing to find these same sentiments expressed by American citizens. We have heard the Reverend William Sloane Coffin proclaim, "The most powerful ideology in the world is not communism but anti-communism, which keeps us from seeing that among the nations of the world we are as imperialistic as the Soviets." One wonders in what kind of world the Reverend Coffin has been living since World War II, a period that spans most of his life. What acts of American imperialism and aggression equal the destruction of the national existence of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, and the forcible deportation of millions of their citizens to the Siberian wastelands? What in American policy matches the forcible suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968? Compare the American treatment of Puerto Rico, which freely adopted the status of commonwealth rather than statehood or independence, and the Soviet occupation of Poland and the buttressing of its minority communist regime. Can anyone in good faith equate the presence of 55 unarmed advisers in El Salvador with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan spearheaded by 110,000 heavily armed troops and an air force which attacks the local population with "yellow rain" chemical weapons in direct violation of international treaties, and whose terroristic practices have driven more than two million Afghans into exile? Is there no difference between the Soviet and Cuban aid to the Nicaraguan communist junta trying to fasten a permanent dictatorship on its people and the half-hearted American aid to those resisting them? These questions Reverend Coffin and others leave unanswered. And if we turn from foreign to domestic policies, can any clergyman with good faith equate the state of religious freedom in the US with the religious persecutions in the USSR?

If anti-communism were a more powerful ideology than communism in America, the Reverend Coffin would long since have been laughed out of his strategic, well-paid post from which,

with all his energies, he seeks to disarm the US and the West and paralyze the will to resist the extension of the Soviet gulag.

Fairness makes us lose our historical perspective of our own actions. That is, if we assume that the two superpowers are similar in their behavior, we look for parallels where there aren't any. For example, there is no real comparison between the brutal five year-plus occupation of Afghanistan in which the Soviets have used inhuman, prohibited weapons to suppress a popular revolt and the US intervention in Grenada to restore free institutions. With fairness, we become vulnerable to Soviet propaganda efforts such as "the USSR lost 20 million people in World War II and all our people are united in their desire that there be no more war . . ." Actually, the USSR probably lost far more than 20 million since the Soviet government has killed off more of its subjects than Hitler did.

Gilbert A. Robinson

Former Special Advisor to the

Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy

Occasionally there are genuine violations of our own guarantee of human rights in American society that justifiably call for public protest. But there are those who seek to equate these episodic violations with the systematic violations of human rights in communist countries. When a democratic community, in order to protect its constellation of human freedoms, sometimes moves legally to suspend or even temporarily limit one of its customary freedoms, we are sure to hear from some quarters that this is morally indistinguishable from the pattern of repression endemic to communist countries. Illustrations abound. During the illegal air-controllers' strike a few years ago when the American government refused to capitulate, those who walked off their jobs in defiance of their pledge not to strike were given a grace period in which to return. When they did not, an action was brought to decertify the union and replace the illegal strikers by other workers. A special commentator, called in by National Public Radio as a labor expert, a Dr. Foner, de-

nounced the action as comparable to the ruthless repression of Solidarity by the Polish dictatorial regime. A few years later when the Supreme Court took a minor step to correct a mechanical interpretation of the Miranda doctrine that would have ruled out an uncoerced confession after a belated warning had been given, Mr. Leonard Boudin, again on National Public Radio, denounced the Burger Court for undermining the Bill of Rights. Apparently Mr. Boudin was making a moral equation between professionals sworn to uphold our constitutional Bill of Rights and those dedicated to destroying it. In passing, one notes that Mr. Boudin's silence about the suppression of human rights in communist countries has been deafening.

The Coffins, the Foners, Boudins, and others of their ilk are guilty of bad faith, but what of those who in good faith espouse the doctrine of moral equivalence in comparing Soviet and American policies at home and abroad? I suggest that most of these individuals do not fully understand the American democratic process. Their misconceptions result largely from the failures of our civic education, in both the public and private sector, to communicate an understanding of, and a commitment to, the basic values of the American self-governing community. In the long run, this failure constitutes a major danger to the survival of free society.

It is certainly true that most American citizens, both young and old, sincerely regard themselves as democratic. But what should concern us are the defects in the understanding of many of our fellow citizens of what genuine commitment to the democratic ethos entails—defects expressed both in periodic violations of the democratic process and the rationalizations offered for this behavior. These constitute our problem. Consider, for example, the growth of a self-righteous lawlessness on many different levels. Starting from the axiomatic premise that law and order is not enough, that they can be present without justice, some of our fellow citizens, in their quest for what they consider justice, overlook the even more elementary truth that no system of justice can exist without law and order, and that the integrity of the democratic process is more important in a



self-governing republic than any specific result we seek to reach by that process.

A case in point is the extent and ramifications of the massive illegal immigration into the US, which could hardly succeed without a powerful domestic support infrastructure. Or the brazenly self-righteous defiance of the leaders of the sanctuary movement for Central American illegal immigrants, posing as political refugees, most of them coming from Mexico where they

already enjoyed political asylum. Or another case in point: the refusal of a half-million young men, the products of our educational system in which they supposedly learn something about democracy, to register for the draft, thus repudiating their responsibilities and duties of citizenship to a country whose privileges they enjoy. Even more pervasive and protracted has been the persistent resort of small minorities and special interest groups to continual disobedience of duly constituted laws by illegal, sometimes violent, trespass of military installations and civilian nuclear energy plants. It has been claimed that the cumulative effects of these mass disruptions, abetted by multitudes of nuisance legal suits, funded sometimes with federal money diverted from its legislated use, have in effect helped bankrupt our nuclear energy industry. Time and time again one reads about measures proposed and adopted in local assemblies on all sorts of questions varying from the location of garbage disposal facilities to the distribution of budget funds that are frustrated or abandoned because of the disruption of proceedings by a determined minority.

Our educational institutions have failed to instill a realization of how fragile a self-governing democratic society is, not only historically but structurally, especially when its existence is threatened by a totalitarian enemy. For its very own rationale encourages a constant critical approach that its enemies can exploit to weaken it. The moral here is *not* to abandon the critical approach—we could not do that without becoming like our enemies—but to employ it intelligently.

This lack of intelligence in understanding the rationale of a self-governing democracy such as ours is reflected in a whole series of misconceptions, the most notable of which is a false and simplistic view of the nature of rights. We are living in an age that has been called the Rights Revolution. Every other day, *new* rights are being discovered, indeed whole complexes of rights—rights of children, welfare rights, rights of the unborn, the right to know—most of which, like the right of privacy, are fathered by the First Amendment. But however rights are defined, it is an elementary fact that every serious moral and po-

litical problem is experienced as a *conflict* between right and right, between good and good. It follows that, despite the claims of protagonists that their right is absolute or unconditionally valid under all circumstances, we cannot intelligibly or intelligently hold that rights are absolute if we believe there is more than one right in the world. Even crusading journalists who proclaim the allegedly absolute right of the public to know, regardless of its impact on national security, draw the line on our absolute right to know *their* sources. In the constellation of rights defining our self-governing democracy, there is not a single one that may not reasonably be temporarily abridged in the interest of defending and upholding other rights or in order to safeguard the security of the system of rights as a whole.

How does this differ from the totalitarians we oppose? Do not the constitutions of all the totalitarian powers nullify their paper declaration of citizens' rights by providing for their limitation or abrogation in times of crisis or when the security or safety of the state is in danger? If, in a democracy, rights are only *prima facie* but not absolute, how do we distinguish ourselves from them? In many ways. We regard our Bill of Rights as strategic but not absolute, as having intrinsic value even when limited under compelling circumstances; and if limited, only temporarily not in perpetuity, and not in order to preserve the security of a party or an administration but to protect a society which is based upon the freely given consent of its citizens. The mere fact that no system of government, whether democratic or despotic, can regard any particular right, liberty, or privilege as absolute because of the plurality of values and goods involved in every decision does not establish a moral equivalence among them. It does not wipe out the distinction between democracy and despotism. It does reinforce the central importance of reason and intelligence in the moral economy of democracy which, in rejecting despotism, must safeguard itself against the dangers of anarchism implicit in the conflicting absolutisms of ultimate, inarbitrable ends.

There is another mistaken notion about democracy that affects much of contemporary thought and practice: the failure

to take account of historical truths in our judgment and the abuse of historical context. This is not to imply that there can be only one brand of historical truth but, rather, that what has been abandoned is the necessary habit of looking at the past when anticipating the future. At any moment of time, the agenda for action is always posed as a conflict between what is and what should be, between the given and the more desirable. This is unavoidable; not all problems can be solved at once, and the resolution of one set of problems always gives rise to others. Superficially, we are always in revolt against the world as we find it, which is to say that we are in revolt against our own history. But without the historical perspective which enables us to see the distance we have covered, the advances won, the forward direction despite lapses and setbacks, we run the danger of succumbing to the permanent superficiality of impatient, infantile leftism which, in the absence of the best, rejects the better as compromise and betrayal, or refuses to accept the unsatisfactory even when the only other available alternatives are worse.

Not all references to history illustrate an intelligent historical perspective. Professor Chester Finn reports that there are some educational areas in this country in which American history is taught as a history of Indian oppression, as a history of the oppression of blacks and chicanos, as a history of the exploitation of immigrants, of the degradation of women and children. The whole history of America is sometimes presented to the minds of the young as a history of oppression which makes the present position of these oppressed groups incomprehensible. Much of what is said in this litany of horrors is, of course, true. But it only illustrates the fact that selected truths can be woven together to communicate a thunderously false tale. It is comparable to a survey of American social problems which, because of the indisputable presence of current problems, fails to mention that any has ever been adequately met.

Not infrequently when we protest misleading accounts, and even outright distortions, of American reality, we are accused of nationalism, of sacrificing the truth on the altar of a mindless

patriotism. But there are many ways of sacrificing the truth. One way is to insist that some special truth is the only truth there is. Not long ago when I protested the unceasing propaganda in the classrooms of elementary schools about the horrors of a nuclear holocaust which was producing nightmares in sensitive children, I was taxed unfairly by some pacifists with denying that war is an evil. They were wrong. Not only do I believe that war is an evil, I believe it is always an evil. What is wrong is believing that war is the *only* evil, or that is the worst. Were we to believe that, why would we have resisted Hitler or the Japanese warlords? Why would the Civil War have been fought? To the many truths that are relevant, here we must add the truth that often will and ability to fight in defense of our freedoms is the best insurance against war waged by an enemy which seeks to deprive us of those freedoms.

It is false to say that the calamities we prepare ourselves to avert become inevitable by virtue of our efforts to avert them. Just as scientific medicine can prevent plague from becoming universal, so there is hope that scientific intelligence in defense of the free and open society can prevent universal war and catastrophe. Our greatest opportunity to defend ourselves lies in the field of education and public enlightenment. It is of a two-fold character. First, we must strengthen and reinforce the understanding of the ethos of American political institutions through upgrading the quality and orientation of American civic education. This should be done in conjunction with preparations for the bicentennial of the American Constitution. Second, we must intensify our efforts to counteract the global ignorance of true domestic American realities—an ignorance that contributes to the fantastic myth of the moral equivalence between the defenders of a free society and those who would destroy it.

William Bennett

The US and the USSR: Why Johnny Can't Tell the Difference

In his 1984 Jefferson Lecture, Sidney Hook pointed to a paradox. During the past 50 years, he observed, our society has been able to make gigantic strides in the direction of greater freedom and social justice, while totalitarian states—first Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union—have produced wars, holocaust, economic misery, concentration camps, and gulags. “Yet in spite of that record,” Mr. Hook said, “the paradox is that faith and belief in the principles of liberal democracy have declined in the United States. Unless that faith and that belief can be restored and revived, liberal democracy will perish.”

Admittedly, Mr. Hook did not draw on batteries of research teams to document the eroding allegiance to the norms of a free, self-governing society. By the canons of modern social science, then, his observations might be impugned as being impressionistic. But many of the finest minds of our time share his impressions. In 1980, for example, Raymond Aron spoke of “loss of confidence in the country’s institutions” throughout the United States. And in Great Britain, the distinguished philosopher Karl Popper stated flatly, “Americans are no longer certain that their country and form of government are the best.”

Such views are especially worrisome to those of us professionally involved in education. After all, one of the tasks of a

school system—indeed, the primordial task of any school system—is the transmission of social and political values. As Bernard Brown observes, “All schools must transmit a cultural heritage and help legitimize the political system—otherwise the regime in the long run loses effectiveness and is replaced, perhaps after a short anarchic interlude, by another regime that knows better how to secure obedience.”

Are American schools helping to transmit our democratic heritage? Do the norms and values that the schools inculcate make the case for our political system? Although the evidence on this question is fragmentary and often anecdotal, what we know is not encouraging. A recent survey found that many 13- and 17-year-olds do not know what happens to a law after it passes Congress, and the majority fail to realize that a president cannot declare a law unconstitutional. In short, far too many students cannot explain the essentials of American democracy.

Why should we be surprised, when many of our schools no longer make sure their charges know the long procession of events that gave rise to modern democracy? We offer our students the flag but sometimes act toward it as if it were only cloth. We neglect to teach them the ancient texts sewn into its fabric, the ideas and endeavors of cultures whose own emblems in time lent us the designs for our own. Too often our high school graduates know little or nothing of the Magna Carta, the Bible, the Greek polis, the Federalist Papers, or the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

We cannot hope that our students will know why the world got into its present situation—or even what that situation is—if they know so little of the events that came before them. Some two months ago, about 15 American teenagers and 15 Soviet teenagers met near Washington to discuss the threat of nuclear war. The Americans were members of a school's talented and gifted program. The Russians attend an embassy school, and are the children of Soviet diplomats. Here are some excerpts from a newspaper account:

What do you think of America? asked one [American] pupil.

'America is a good country,' replied Dmitry Domakhin, 12, whose father is a diplomat. 'It's such a pity that it's a capitalist country.' Dmitry grinned as the audience of parents and pupils laughed.

Later, he posed his own question to the American children, 'In the Soviet Union, when we have lunch at school, the lunch is free,' he said. 'I just want to know, how much do you have to pay?' Ninety to 95 cents per meal was the answer. Dmitry smiled again.

Alexei Palladin, 14, whose father is a correspondent for [a] Soviet newspaper, pointed out that the Soviet Union and the United States have been friends before. 'What do you know about the Second World War?' Alexei asked the Americans. No answer. He nodded as if that was what he expected. 'Nobody even knows,' he said, 'that we were allies. We were fighting Nazism together.'

When I came across this story, the thought crossed my mind that in exchange for the ability to induce one or two of our talented and gifted youngsters to make some reference, however fleeting, to free elections, free speech, Afghanistan, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, or to the plight of Andrei Sakharov, I'd willingly trade away of couple of Olympic gold medals.

Yet when these students fail to respond with an awareness of historical truths, whose fault is it? Is it theirs? No. Whose children are these? They're ours. Aren't they as bright as their Soviet counterparts? Of course they are. Are they good? Yes. Are they well-intentioned and open-minded? Yes. Are they eager to learn? Yes. They are all these things. But they are also, so it seems, intellectually innocent, and as Kant said, "Innocence is a splendid thing, but it is easily seduced." It is not our students' fault that we have forgotten that intellectual innocence too can be seduced, so that they can only nod their heads in agreement and applaud when confronted with standard Soviet propaganda themes.

In the United States, as we grow up, we are taught in school to be fair—to exhibit good sportsmanship: "Listen to the other person. Put yourself in his shoes." These virtues apply at home where we share values, but they are misleading when we are dealing with adversaries. As a result, we delude ourselves into seeing the Soviets as mirrored versions of ourselves. The fact is, however, that the other superpower on which we project our own values and motivations has eliminated tens of millions of people systemically, violates solemn international obligations, throws people who disagree with it in psychiatric hospitals. Our fairness leads us into assuming that good will and evidence of good intentions will be reciprocated. . . . Fairness sometimes makes us feel responsible for Soviet bad behavior on the premise that it takes two to make a fight. We feel obligated to shoulder guilt even when there is no reason. It allows the Soviets to look pious and claim that anything that they do is in response to US actions.

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 Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy

It is important for our children to realize the ways in which the past illuminates the present. Our students will not recognize the urgency in Nicaragua if they cannot recognize the history that is threatening to repeat itself. If they have never heard of the Cuban missile crisis, they cannot comprehend the Sandinista head of secret police when he states that "Cuba's friends are Nicaragua's friends, and Cuba's enemies are Nicaragua's enemies." If they know nothing of the Russian Revolution, they cannot comprehend the Sandinista Minister of Defense when he says "Marxism/Leninism is the scientific doctrine that guides our revolution" and "We would like to help all revolutions." If students know nothing of the Monroe Doctrine, what difference will the intrusion of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Central America mean to them?

How have we come to such a pass? Surely one explanation for the fact that democratic values no longer seem to command the assent they once did is that for many years now the teaching of social studies in our schools has been dominated by cultural relativism, the notion that the attempt to draw meaningful dis-

tinctions between opposing traditions is a judgment which all virtuous and rightminded people must sternly condemn.

One social studies series for elementary schools, for example, advises the teacher that the material aims to "decrease inclination toward egocentrism, ethnocentrism, and stereotyping." But what this means, it turns out, is more than teaching children that all cultures and traditions are not the same. It means teaching that all cultures and traditions are equally valid, that there are not real criteria for good and bad, right and wrong, noble and base. But if all traditions are equally valid, then there is clearly not much point in transmitting a particular cultural heritage, a distinctive set of social and political values. On the contrary, to the extent that educational philosophy is dominated by the idea of cultural relativism, any attempt to impart a particular tradition is ipso facto illegitimate.

So each generation brings its *tabula rasa* into the world, and many educators, including the cultural relativists, proceed to teach as if it would be a shame to dirty the slate with any affection or respect for our own tradition. But the world itself is not a *tabula rasa*. Some important things have happened to make us what we are, and we cannot be intelligible to ourselves without remembering these things. We remain alien to ourselves, strangers at home, when we do not know our past.

I am reminded of a passage in C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*. The devil Screwtape is tutoring his young nephew and disciple, Wormwood, in the arts of corruption. The trick, he explains, is to keep men from acquiring wisdom, a trick accomplished by cultivating disdain for the past and a devotion to present-mindedness. "Since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time," Screwtape says, "it is important to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always a danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another." I believe that if our children do not even know the inherited principles of a liberal democracy, it is foolish to expect that they should put their faith in those principles.

How then are we to restore the American faith in the prin-

ciples of liberal democracy? A good way to begin, it seems to me, would be by recognizing the importance and the value of the study of history, and by taking the necessary steps to strengthen history as a subject taught in the schools. As Meg Greenfield of the *Washington Post* writes, "In the reconstruction of American schooling that is going forward I would put properly taught history second on the list of goals to be achieved—right after literacy."

Apart from its intrinsic interest as a record of the past, history is a vitally important study for several reasons. First, history is organized memory, and memory, in turn, is the glue that holds our political community together. Strictly speaking, the United States did not simply develop; rather, the United States was created in order to realize a specific political vision. Today, as in the past, it is the memory of that political vision that defines us as Americans.

Throughout our history, there have indeed been occasions when our actions have fallen tragically short of our vision, and it is important for our students to know about those occasions. Certainly, we Americans are not strangers to sin. But there have also been occasions when we have not fallen short of our ideals, and students ought to know about those as well. Professor Lino Graglia writes, "In the context of inhumanity and misery I read as history, I hold the American achievement high." By studying American history, and yes, celebrating its heroes explicitly for each generation, and noting its achievements as well as its failures, our students are invited to grasp the values of our political tradition.

But if history is a kind of collective memory, it is also a mode of inquiry which aims at determining the truth. As a method of inquiry, history teaches respect for facts and for the proper methods of weighing evidence. It helps us to distinguish superficiality from depth, bias from objectivity, tendentiousness from honesty, stupidity from discernment, and confusion from lucidity. History provides us with a sense of perspective and with the ability to make critical judgments. As the distinguished historian, Felix Gilbert, has observed, "The past is one way—

and not the worst way—of acquiring the right and the criteria to judge the present.” And acquiring the criteria to judge the present, it seems to me, is no less vital to the success and well-being of democratic self-government than acquiring a sense of community.

But again, in being exposed to the truth about our history, our students, of course, should be exposed to the whole truth. So let it be told. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan puts it:

Am I embarrassed to speak for a less than perfect democracy? Not one bit. Find me a better one. Do I suppose there are societies which are free of sin? No I don't. Do I think ours is on balance incomparably the most hopeful set of human relations the world has? Yes I do. Have we done obscene things? Yes we have. How did our people learn about them? They learned about them on television. In the newspapers.

Unfortunately, even the subject of history is in danger of losing its distinct identity, of becoming absorbed in the smorgasbord of this and that known as “social studies.” The Council for Basic Education noted in its 1982 report, *Making History Come Alive*:

In most schools today, the subject of history is subsumed by the curricular genus of ‘social studies.’ Teachers of history belong to social studies departments, they commonly identify themselves as social studies teachers, and they teach other subjects in addition to history. Parents are likely to presume that if their children are taking any social studies courses, they are learning history. They may or they may not be.

The Council for Basic Education report largely confirmed the findings of a 1975 study conducted by the Organization of American Historians. The OAH study noted a significant decline in the teaching of secondary school history throughout the

country. It found that in some states "virtually no training in history is demanded" of secondary school history teachers. In one state, history teachers were being encouraged to emphasize concepts that transcend "any given historical situation." In another state, the trend was toward ethnocultural courses; in another, the focus was on problem solving, decision making, and social action. And in another, the OAH representative predicted that history would soon be supplanted by more "relevant" courses such as consumer affairs, ecology, multicultural studies, and so on.

What about the widely publicized famine in Ethiopia? Each day we are shown on television horrible pictures of starving children. We are told that 7 out of 40 million are on the verge of death in that country, and the response of the world is overwhelming. Giving to charity inspires a beautiful feeling; it is nice and comfortable to feel that one is saving somebody's life.

But did we ever try to understand why, suddenly, so many people are starving? We are told that the drought is to be blamed and we do not question this comfortable fiction. In fact, drought has as little to do with Ethiopian famine as it had to do with the similar famine in Russia in the 1920s, or in the Ukraine in the 1930s. It is simply a communist method to starve people into submission, and a result of collectivization introduced in Ethiopia in 1975.

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The present decline in the status of history in our schools is very serious. To be ignorant of history is to be, in a very fundamental way, intellectually defenseless, unable to understand the workings either of our own society or of other societies. It is to be condemned to what Walter Lippmann called a state of "chronic childishness." Lippmann continued:

Men must collaborate with their ancestors. Otherwise they must begin, not where their ancestors arrived but where

their ancestors began. If they exclude the tradition of the past from the curricula of the schools they make it necessary for each generation to repeat the errors rather than benefit by the successes of its predecessors.

Such a situation is intolerable. In order to change it, I propose an intellectual initiative designed to transmit our social and political values, to generate individual intelligence, and to provide our young people with the perspective they need to function effectively in today's world. At the core of this intellectual initiative—yes, it too is a kind of defense initiative—lies an enhanced appreciation of the role and value of the study of history. Specifically, then, I advocate consideration of the following program:

First, our schools should treat history as an autonomous discipline, related to, but distinct from, the social studies. This history must be sure to teach the events and the principles that have formed modern states.

Second, local communities should agree (and they can agree) on what constitutes a minimum of historical knowledge which every high school graduate, regardless of whether he or she goes on to college, must master.

Third, just as math and physics must be taught by persons who know their subject, so history must be taught by people who know history. As the Council for Basic Education has pointed out, "The preparation of history teachers should include concentration in history, taught by historians and augmented by significant study in such related fields as literature, the arts, anthropology, and the social sciences."

If taught honestly and truthfully, the study of history will give our students a grasp of their nation, a nation that the study of history and current events will reveal is still, indeed, "the last best hope on earth." Our students should know that. They *must* know that, because nations can be destroyed from without, but they can also be destroyed from within.

Americans are the heirs of a precious historical legacy. Let it never be said of us that we failed as a nation because we ne-

glected to pass on this legacy to our children. Remember that whatever our ancestry of blood, in one sense we all have the same fathers—our Founding Fathers. Let it be said that we told our children the whole story, our long record of glories, failures, aspirations, sins, achievements, and victories. Then let us leave them to determine their own views of it all: America in the totality of its acts. If we can dedicate ourselves to that endeavor, I am confident that our students will discern in the story of their past the truth. They will cherish that truth. And it will help keep them free.

Joseph Sobran

Popular Culture and the “Suicide of the West”

A few weeks ago I saw *The Killing Fields*—the first movie in memory to depict communist atrocities. As you probably know, it's about Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge victory. It shows re-education camps, mass murders, piles of corpses—characteristic horrors of communism. Only one thing is missing: the word “communism.” The movie studiously avoids it. It seems to blame all this killing on little Asiatic fanatics, with no hint that their leaders were acting out the classic pattern of an ideology they had picked up in the West, in Paris, to be precise.

You can see almost anything in movies these days. The law even tolerates hard-core porn. But there seems to be an unwritten law against hard-core anti-communism. Sometimes I wonder if there's some sort of ideological Hays Office operating in Hollywood, protecting the viewing public from the indecorous manifestations of the Cold War mentality. Most Hollywood movies with political or heavy social themes have a left-wing slant. This is true even though the great majority of such movies have been box office flops, while the right-wing themes of Clint Eastwood and Charles Bronson movies have been tremendous successes.

Long after our boys in Europe were demobilized, Hollywood was still fighting fascism. This catch-call category includes any-

thing opposed to the Left. Sometimes the fascist role is played by the CIA, as in *Three Days of the Condor*. Sometimes it's the House Un-American Activities Committee, as in *The Front*. It can be the military, as in *Apocalypse Now*. It can be a right-wing government abroad, as in *Missing*, or the nuclear power industry, as in *The China Syndrome*. Richard Nixon has been used as a looming quasi-fascist figure in the background of a number of movies. *The Killing Fields* tries to blame the fate of Cambodia at least partly on him. At times the fascist theme is fantastically literal. In *The Boys from Brazil* and *Marathon Man*, old Nazis make a comeback. Both these films made me reflect that if a handful of German octogenarians holed up in a South American hide-out are really capable of taking over the world, we ought to give them some credit: They really are the master race after all.

Hollywood imputes to fascism a kind of evil magic that o'erleaps the normal rules of causality and makes even isolated, superannuated Nazis a clear and present danger. In *The Boys from Brazil*, Joseph Mengele threatens the world by cloning a number of kids from tissue saved from Der Fuehrer's body. The movie's profound grasp of racial science can be inferred from the fact that each and every one of these boys is an insufferable brat.

Movies like these have a profoundly consoling quality. Hollywood movies may seem to have gotten more realistic than in the days of Irving Thalberg and Cecil B. DeMille, but in a deeper sense they are really the same as ever in catering to wishful thinking, in evading reality, in confirming a sentimental worldview. They present sex obsessively, but without the complications of love, jealousy, marriage, birth, loyalty, divorce, abandonment, disease, and neurosis that attend it in serious literature and drama. They represent politics without recognizing the largest political reality in the world today: communism. They finger the eternal enemy as a generic fascism, a force long since discredited and vanquished in the real world. A real movie about communism would be so unsettling that it probably wouldn't even find a distributor.

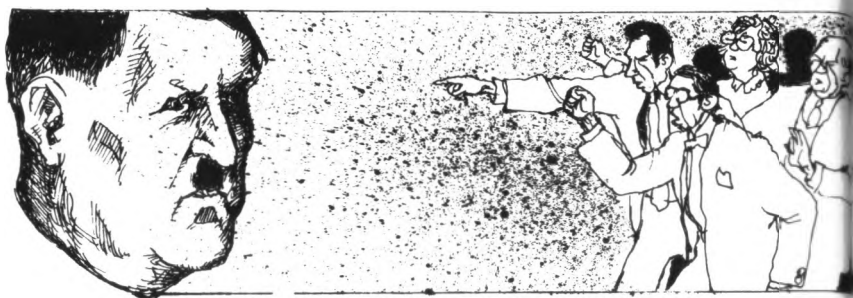
Hollywood is rich in fantasies but impoverished in genuine

ideals—ideals seriously related to moral standards. Eugene Methvin has recently written that the diabolization of Hitler in the current culture is actually an evasion, an instance of what the psychologist Harry Stack Sullivan called “selective inattention.” It spares us the pain of facing a larger, blacker, and present evil. Hitler is safe. We can all deplore him without risk. Hollywood’s Fondas, Brandos, and Coppolas can safely strike their moral postures against fascism by adopting the current party line and pretending that fascism’s heirs are now in the West. They know these bold gestures won’t land them in jail, for they’re really in perfect accord with the whole culture of evasion.

Yet communism has murdered several times as many people as Nazism. It continues to extinguish every freedom liberalism once stood for—freedom of religion, of the press, of political criticism and opposition. Ironically, liberalism protests infringements of these freedoms only in anti-communist countries.

Thirty years ago, the philosopher Sidney Hook wrote that to be liberal is to be, almost by definition, anti-communist as well as anti-fascist. But today, the phrase “liberal anti-communism” sounds less like a redundancy than a contradiction in terms. To be anti-communist is to be immediately labeled a “right-winger.” What we now call liberalism is less like the old liberalism than like the old fellow-traveling. Contemporary liberalism follows the contours of communism. If this were merely a matter of hypocrisy in the liberal community, it might not be much of a problem. But I am afraid that it goes deeper than that. It is now a problem in our culture. We live with our minds in concrete, and we don’t even notice that we are carrying contradictions in our souls. The infection of our language, our moral habits, our very thoughts, touches even conservative anti-communists. We take for granted things that ought to startle and shame us.

Recently we celebrated our famous victory in Europe with our old allies—the same Soviets who helped Hitler launch the war with an invasion of Poland; the same Soviet Union that remains, after forty years, the proud possessor of Poland. What on earth were we celebrating? The defeat of Hitler. But by



whom? And for what purpose? The diabolization of Hitler robs us of our critical faculties. It deprives us of the power to make the kind of comparisons a healthy moral instinct would make almost automatically.

Thus we react with shock if a lone eccentric wears a swastika. We recognize it as an act of obscene perversity even to associate oneself with a mere symbol of Nazism. Imagine how we'd feel if a new regime in Central America were to raise a flag with that hated insignia and to make noises about racial purity and the international Jewish money power. Would we listen seriously to the argument by some Americans that, after all, Nazism wasn't monolithic? That Hitler was only an aberration whose excesses might be avoided in the future? That the neo-Nazi regime represented the "legitimate aspirations" of the people, or that it was an "indigenous force?"

When an individual or a regime, deliberately chooses association with communist symbols, we are not equally shocked. We feel little, if any, horror at the implied link with nearly seventy years of slavery, aggression, and megamurder, still in progress. We simply don't recognize communism as blasphemy against God and a brutal threat to all humanity. We are not scandalized by the presence of large communist parties in Western democracies, although we wouldn't tolerate large neo-Nazi parties for a week.

Hitler remains a magnetic symbol of evil. But communism has somehow remained semi-respectable. Good liberals shed no



tears for its victims, strike no moral postures before its embassies. Instead, they make excuses for it and ridicule serious concern about it. To denounce South Africa or Chile is to "speak out" and to earn moral credit. To denounce the Soviet Union, however, is to be "strident." Many of those who talk about the "crime of silence" during the Nazi era practically *demand* silence about communism. The refugee from Nazism or even the visitor from South Africa is presumed to speak with the moral authority of a first-hand witness and victim; the refugee from communism is treated as a warped personality if he speaks solely on his own narrow experience. Elie Wiesel is a prophet; Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is obsessed.

It's true that in the nuclear age we have to find a way to share the planet with the Soviets, even if they aren't themselves eager to share; the French scholar Jean-Francois Revel has observed that communism's property rights command universal respect. If the Nazis had survived the war and gotten the atomic bomb, we might also have had to make practical accommodations with them. But that would not have changed the moral nature of the National Socialist regime any more than the necessity of negotiating with a kidnapper confers moral respectability on kidnapping.

But with communism, the West has shown the hostage's abject tendency to see the kidnapper's point of view. What we call liberalism is no longer distinguished by its dedication to freedom everywhere: It is distinguished by its abiding refusal to

condemn communism morally, unequivocally, in principle. It virtually worships the Soviet Union as a death-god, a Moloch, always to be propitiated, never to be opposed or provoked. We must never "over-react."

Even President Reagan has publicly accepted the burden of assuring the Soviets that we don't mean them any harm. No doubt it was as a slip of the tongue, but it shows the way our tongues now tend to slip. We give communism the benefit of every doubt. Revel has also remarked that whereas we judge other regimes by their records, we judge communism by its promises. Its entire historical record is inadmissible evidence.

Popular sentiment, as the historian John Lukacs reminds us, the frank and spontaneous sentiment we express privately among our friends—differs sharply from the lofty abstractions we maintain before strangers, to the pollsters, and on the editorial page. Popular sentiment is anti-communist, as the success of the rare anti-communist movie like *Red Dawn* makes clear. Everyone knows what communism is like. But at the level of quasi-official public speech, we ignore the realities and talk of "Soviet leaders," "the two superpowers," and the like, as if the two systems were analogous. "Public opinion," which is really the dialect of the mass communications media, easily equates the two superpowers. But the equation of good and evil serves the interest of evil. (Not that this equation is consistently made. Sometimes we are admonished that we mustn't act like them by meeting force with force. This too serves the interests of communism. And so we tell ourselves alternatively that we're no better than they are or that we are indeed better than they are, depending on which proposition will be most helpful, at a given moment, to our enemy.)

We even speak of American communists as more sinned against than sinning. They are "dissenters," "victims of McCarthyism." This is the message of *Daniel* and *The Front*. We watch American-made documentaries about old communists who idealize themselves and recall how cruelly they were persecuted, being jailed and fired from jobs or simply forced to identify

themselves as communists at a public hearing. This is considered persecution by those who defended Stalin's death sentences for whole classes of "class enemies" and who were working to extend his power to this country. They failed to make America red. And their impotence wasn't innocence. But the very word "McCarthyism" has come to incorporate the assumption that it is a form of persecution to identify a communist as a communist.

The Soviet Union itself has applied for, and received from liberal opinion, accredited victim status. It allegedly lost 20 million people during World War II. Therefore, it is afraid of war. By this logic, it should be afraid of communism, since it has lost more than 20 million to communism. We hear a good deal about Soviet paranoia: unlike anti-communist paranoia, the Soviet brand is to be excused and humored. The Soviets only built up their nuclear arsenal because they wanted parity with us, we were once told. Those who made this argument now know they were wrong, and they do not remind us of their error; they have simply advanced to other absurdities, such as the rationale that Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was "defensive." Did Hitler defend himself against Czechoslovakia and Poland and Austria? Constant Soviet vilification of the United States is written off as "mere" propaganda, because it is a pack of lies. When President Reagan criticizes the Soviets, however, liberal opinion mugs him and repeats his words endlessly as putative "gaffes," if not outright provocation. How can a man who talks like that sincerely want peace?

Out of the tradition of journalistic objectivity, which is an honorable one, grew the notion that we as journalists should try to describe events in the most dispassionate, unambiguous, concrete, scientific words possible. And this tendency has been, I think, one of the reasons rather than any particular ideological bias, why notions like "moral equivalence" gain such an easy footing in the press. Now, it's ironic that this should be so. The social sciences are, at least in their most admirable quarters, now abandoning the idea that they can simply build themselves on the model

of the physical sciences, but their legacy to journalism has taken very deep root and it leads to distortion after distortion.

Suzanne Garment

Associate Editor

The Wall Street Journal

Embarrassing the president has become the standard activity of the news media and the prestige press. Conservatives sense bias in journalism, and they are right; but they talk about it in terms of "accuracy in media." The problem is not inaccuracy. The information we get is usually accurate enough. The problem is that minions of the media are constantly digging for facts, leaks, "gaffes," and other trivia that will put conservative and anti-communist forces and indeed the entire American tradition in the worst light. Liberals and communists are spared this kind of gaffe research. Mr. Reagan and Jesse Helms, not Tip O'Neill and Ron Dellums, are the targets of the investigative reporters and expose specialists; the CIA is embarrassed, not the KGB; the sins of our allies, not our enemies, must be brought to light. And how many "corrupt and repressive" pro-American regimes have fallen to communist regimes that, much to our recurrent surprise, turn out to be infinitely more repressive? Once you grasp that contemporary journalism is in the business of embarrassing people, the pattern of bias is fully disclosed. As James Burnham has formulated "the iron law of liberalism," the preferred enemy is always to the right.

Our popular culture is not a folk culture. It is a mass-marketed culture that combines pandering and propagandizing. It's directed at the moderately educated who imbibe the fictions of liberal public opinion at college and can hardly imagine another way of looking at or talking about the world. Some of the Contras in Nicaragua aren't very nice, so we can't support them, can we? Yet, liberal public opinion had no such scruples about supporting Stalin against Hitler, or about trade credits to the Soviet bloc. We are proud of the number who go to college nowadays, but the fact is that most of them emerge from their

education with no power of imagining alternatives to the hackneyed policy prescriptions of liberalism. If anything, their critical powers seem to be impaired by their schooling. They learn the respectable noises to make, the fashionable moral poses to strike, the proper subjects of liberal indignation. Of course, a good many of them have the intelligence to resist the conditioning process, but this is the tendency of the process itself.

When Susan Sontag, an avatar of the Left from way back, said that communism is fascism, she shocked the intellectual world. It was a step in the right direction, but despite her good intentions, she was being soft on communism. Communism is worse than fascism by nearly every index. That it should be almost taboo to say so in some quarters is also an index of the state of popular culture today.

Fascism is recognized as a generic evil, and the word serves as a catch-all term for everything the Left hates, from Mussolini to Joe McCarthy to big corporations. These things don't even have to be related to each other except in the minds of communists and liberals. But while the Left makes these imaginary connections, it plays down real relations among communist regimes. Communism "is not monolithic." The latest communist insurgency, even if it receives lots of Soviet or Cuban aid, is "essentially indigenous." The sins of the Stalinist fathers mustn't be visited on the sons, even if the sons are showing every sign of practicing Stalinism—which is to say, communism. The ease with which the embarrassing and inherent evils of communism are ascribed to the personal eccentricity of Stalin, by the way, is one of the wonders of leftist dialectics. Stalin seems to have been a 30-year exception to the laws of historical inevitability.

The slightest overstatement in criticizing communism is taken, in his hothouse culture, to invalidate everything else. When it comes to fascism, however, or even the American way of life, no hyperbole of condemnation can go too far, no shortcoming can be overlooked, no icon can pass unassaulted. When the President has made so bold as to attack the Soviet Union, no liberal commentator bothered to confront the question of whether his charges were true. He was guilty of sins of sheer

tone—sins for which the Left isn't held responsible. The media worked overtime to turn the President's words into embarrassments. When congressmen and senators go to Moscow and Managua and return with the conviction that the communists really want peace, the "adversary press" doesn't ask critical questions. The communists' and liberals' motives aren't in question; the anti-communists' are.

Journalists always have their deadlines, as you know, they are always in a hurry, and there is no time for them to explain, for example, what the Supreme Soviet is. So they say that the Supreme Soviet is the Soviet parliament. There is no time to explain that trade unions do not exist in Russia except as bogus organizations . . . hence the implication is that they are like Western trade unions.

Lev Navrozov

*Director, Center for the Survival
of Western Democracies*

I was amused a few months ago to discover that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels use the word "communistic" in *The Communist Manifesto*. The word "communistic" now has a Birchite rings about it. But it's a perfectly useful word to describe all those people who aren't substantively communist but are, so to speak, "adjectivally" communist—the "useful idiots" Lenin spoke of, the "progressive forces" contemporary communists speak of, the sort of people who are always available for peace and civil rights marches and popular fronts and broad coalitions. In a word, the Left as well as the Right recognizes that liberals are part of the communist enterprise. Only the liberals refuse to recognize it. They treat the whole idea strictly as a right-wing delusion. Why it should also be a communist delusion, they never explain.

Discounting is one of the major occupations of intellectual life in America today. People watch the news on television and they listen to the comments by the anchor people and so on and they discount it so they don't believe it. Nevertheless it is very much like what many of us may remember about going to church in our youth—you sit there, you don't believe any of it, but it rains upon you like drizzle, and this drizzle just keeps coming down. You think it is having no effect on you because you know you are bright and that you can discount it. You don't pay attention to it. But it does have an effect because . . . you never have the courage or inclination to fight against it. So you just let it go. And this, I think, is what is going on now, in particular, in the universities. The drizzle has begun, and the drizzle is incessant. If nothing else, it has a neutralizing effect upon the truth . . .

Tom Wolfe
Author

It is not a delusion; it is simply a fact. By and large, today's liberalism is communistic. That's part of the operative meaning of "liberal" now, though it isn't considered very nice to say so. But my point isn't to blame liberals. They are only the salient expression of what's wrong with our culture of evasion. It is true that unless liberals condemn communism, America should condemn liberalism, because, in a broad sense, liberalism has become the accomplice of communism.

The people I really want to blame are the conservatives, the anti-communists. We are soft on communism by being soft on liberalism. We haven't forced the moral issue: the refusal of liberals to condemn communism and all its works and pomps, to acknowledge its victims, to face its full horror. We have been content to call liberals naïve and give them credit for good intentions. But it's too late in the century for naïvete. Moral neutrality is not evidence of good intentions, especially when the neutrality is perfunctory and bogus. It's our duty to expose and morally embarrass the silent accomplices of communism.

Melvin Lasky

“The View From Europe”

FAN TCHAI asked KUNG the master (viz CUNFUCIUS) for instructions in farming. Said the Master: I know less than any old peasant. He made the same reply about gardening: An old gardener knows more than I do.

TSEU-LOU asked: If the Prince of Mei appointed you head of government, to what would you first set your mind?

KUNG: To call people and things by their names, that is by the correct denominations, to see that the terminology was exact.

EZRA POUND, **Guide to Kulchur** (1938)

I take it from the official conference program that our first point of departure is the recent East-West argument of President Reagan to the effect:

The democracies have their own serious injustices to deal with. But this should not prevent us from making crucial moral distinctions between pluralist systems which acknowledge their own wrongs and shortcomings, and systems that excuse their defects in the name of totalitarian ideology.

This is cogent so far as it goes, but does it quite go far enough? For surely the acknowledgement of wrongs, shortcomings, and

injustices is not by and for itself a complete social virtue unless the enlightened establishment finds sufficient political energy and imagination to go on and do something effective about it. After all, the ritualistic routine of "Bolshevik self-criticism" can also be taken as a kind of acknowledgement of shortcomings; and from Lenin's last words in 1922 to Gorbachev's first words today the Soviets have fulsomely recognized the faults of bureaucracy, inefficiency, alcoholism, illegality, and have over long dour, five-year plans done practically nothing about them. Clearly, the democracies unless they address themselves shrewdly and actively to the "serious injustices" often tend to fall back into a ritual of their own which "excuses their defects" in the name of congratulatory self-critical ideology.

The second point of departure must surely be Jeane Kirkpatrick's well-known confrontation of this problem—why such crucial moral distinctions are lost, and how it is that an open, prospering, self-critical *and* reforming society is so widely, and wildly, confounded with a closed, poverty-stricken, one-party-line totalitarian state. Ambassador Kirkpatrick has addressed herself to this problem several times, most notably at Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs) where she made the valiant attempt to beard some of the doctrinaires of moral equivalence in their own ideological den. She disputed the tiresome theses of *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, and their faithful readers among the youthful Oxford Union debaters. Are there really no moral differences between the two superpowers? Where does the notion of an "equity of menace" or "moral symmetry" come from? What are the current political (and also the deep historical) forces that are working towards what Jean-François Revel has called the de-legitimization of the West? As he caustically noted, "Democratic civilization is the first in history to blame itself because another power is working to destroy it . . ." Alas, the West is in some danger of becoming a willing victim, and even revelling in its putative illegitimacy with an enthusiasm unprecedented since certain medieval kings prided themselves on their bastardy.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick was not then, in London among critics and

sharpshooters, very sanguine; and I suspect that even in her own capital, in Washington among sympathetic Americans on the firing-line, she is not substantially more hopeful. I quote her London conclusion:

. . . If it is no longer possible to distinguish between freedom and despotism—the United States is a free society; between consent and violence, we are a society based on consent; between open and closed societies, we are an open society—then the erosion of the foundations of a distinctively Western, democratic civilization is already far advanced and the situation is serious indeed.

I am not sure that my own “view from Europe” will prove to be any more hopeful, although a little more precision (or, in any event, depressing detail) as to what the varieties of the doctrine of moral equivalence amount to, who the doctrinaires are and what the present danger actually is, may point to the limits of their intellectual impact.

Not so long ago there was published in *The Times* of London a leading article entitled “Murder is Murder” (March 2, 1985), which affirmed that

. . . the principal totalitarian state, the Soviet Union, is also the principal supplier, sponsor and supporter of terrorism as a form of political action in the non-communist world.

No sooner said than vigorously denied, in one of those crisp and worthy Letters-to-the-Editor which seem unfailingly to come (as in this case) from Oxbridge men, distinguished figures in the British educational world, well-known polar explorers and Mount Everest climbers. “Fair enough,” writes Sir Jack Longland, “and we all applaud lustily. But what about the converse? . . .” And the converse which he offers, obviously because it is also “fair enough” and worthy of lusty applause, is this:

The United States is the principal supplier, sponsor and supporter of terrorism as a form of political action in the less than communist state of Nicaragua.

He concludes, with the gentleman-farmer touch of a countryman from Derbyshire:

I diffidently suggest, Sir, that you undertake an intensive study of geese and ganders. For both the sauce is bitter.

Note that our English doctrinaire of moral equivalence thinks of himself as a sensible man of the middle, at once fair-minded and even-handed. He is simultaneously anti-Soviet and anti-American; for both superpowers are supporters of terrorism. He is presumably neutral as between the contestants. No matter that the Soviet camp has been massively arming the IRA for its terrorist politics in Northern Ireland, murdering there both British soldiers and British civilians. Sir Jack will have no fat nor eat any lean. He is like the neutral frontierswoman in the Abe Lincoln log-cabin anecdote who fairmindedly and even-handedly said, "Go to it, Husband! Go to it, Bear!" I am also reminded of that self-righteous Prussian police chief in the Berlin of 1932 who tried to give reassurances of his political and moral alertness by boasting that he had as many Nazis as anti-Nazis in his prison cells.

I suspect that English commentators are becoming increasingly captivated by this kind of ambidextrous ideology, this literary form of a two-handed back hand stroke; and some are even going on from the current equivalences to rewrite other bits of history in the same formula of a rigged, artificial balance of error, confounding accidents and misdemeanors, equating follies and crimes. Thus, in a recent article in the conservative *Sunday Telegraph* (London, September 1, 1985, p. 12), the young novelist and critic A.N. Wilson wrote the following:

. . . It is hard to know which is more disgusting: the brutal rape of German women in Berlin by the Red Army in

1945 or the enormous escalation of VD in Europe after the Americans entered the war.

If the British statement of moral equivalence is rather free of ideology, and mostly unconnected with the Left-Right spectrum—related really to a vague, if painful, regret and resentment that (alas) other empires are now making history—on the Continent these things are ordered differently. Revel has reminded us, in his formidable new book, *How Democracies Perish*, that eloquent elements in France on both Left and Right have combined to subvert the consensus of common sense which does draw a distinction between democracy and totalitarianism, between a defensive military alliance like NATO and a war-machine dedicated to the expansion of the communist empire. The doctrine here feeds in part on elements of the old traditional anti-Americanism and a Parisian cultural snobbery which has contempt for transatlantic vulgarities. It also feeds—especially on the Left where the writings of Solzhenitsyn and the case of the harassed Sakharov have made “progressive” and openly pro-Soviet sympathies largely untenable—on the frustration of inveterate ideologists who, if they can no longer be pro-Moscow, can at least go on hating Washington all the more; for if Russia is no longer an attractive Utopia then America must become an even worse source of reaction and counterrevolution.

So it is that we have the European paradox that with the disappointment of the Left in the “workers paradise” there has been a redoubling of energies in anti-Americanism. When socialism fails, fight capitalism even harder! A Mitterrand minister like Jack Lang may, generally, be taken as characteristic of this orientation *à la gauche*; and Alain de Benoist, *à la droite*. Lang despises so-called “Americanization,” and it is Benoist who thunders against Western “decadence,” who believes (or, at least says) that an “Americanized” West is worse than communism. *Le Monde* (May 20, 1981) quotes him as arguing:

The truth is that there are two distinct forms of totalitarianism, very different in their natures and effects, but both

dreadful. The first, in the East, imprisons, persecutes, ravages the body; at least it leaves hope intact. The other, in the West, ends up creating happy robots. It air-conditions hell. It kills the soul.

It would be short-sighted to perceive such even-handedness against both the totalitarian superpower cultures as anything but a reinforcement of the conventional French post-war campaign against the one culture, the transatlantic primitives out to "Americanize" the world. As Alain de Benoist himself concedes, one can resign oneself to the unpleasant prospect of "having to war a Red Army cap some day . . . But we cannot stand the idea that we will eventually have to spend the rest of our lives eating hamburgers in Brooklyn."

There is, thus, a trick in the so-called "equivalence": one valence is weighted more than the other, one valence in the equivalence is more equal than the other.

I was reminded of how old this ideological trick is when the obituary notices of Mr. Robert Woodruff—who died recently in Atlanta, at the age of 95—registered one of his greatest triumphs in founding the global empire that was Coca-Cola.

The company he controlled became so famous that a cartoonist for *Pravda* could render the shape of a Coca-Cola bottle and everyone would know that he was using it as a symbol of "American Imperialism," or "Coca-colonization." . . .

(*Daily Telegraph*, March 9, 1985)

The French Left loved the phrase Coca-colonization: making a punning anti-imperialist point (where the French Right nowadays will have to make do only with something dreary like "McDonaldization"), but even then the fall-back position, in the arguments of the day—involving Camus and Sartre, Aron and Malraux, Burnham and Rousset—was the equally facile and quite insincere equivalence between *Coca-Cola* and *Kolyma*. The Arctic cruelties of the Gulag labor camps were supposedly set off against

the syrupy insipidities of a fizzy drink. Too bad Jean-Paul Sartre didn't live long enough to learn of how the reforming, innovative, ameliorating instincts of the Americans even went on to change the formula of Coca-Cola. That's evidently the very worst thing about rigid reactionary American capitalism and its ossified culture: It's always changing, constantly changing things.

One of the ostensible sources of European anti-Americanism is a kind of Old World view that Americans, in their continuing concern for the moral ends of policy, are childish. We do not understand the tides of history, and we do not understand the game of nations. We are callow, say these Europeans, and therefore are not to be entrusted with serious responsibility for maintaining world order. That is a task better left to wiser and more sophisticated minds. No serious government would produce an ideological (to be said with a sneer) purpose. As you can see, here, too, these Europeans have their American counterparts. In any case, when you consider that twice in this country, such wise and sophisticated powers as those in Western Europe reduced their own spot on this planet to rubble, it makes you wonder whence they derive their claim to better worldly understanding. (And furthermore it ought to be remembered that the war against the Nazis was, in fact, an ideological war, just as our struggle against the Soviet Union is an ideological one.

*Midge Decter
Executive Director
Committee for a Free World*

Furthermore, consider the reactions of two widely-seen television documentaries. French commentators were full of praise for the famous film out of New York called *The Day After*. The documentation of how a bomb decimates, nuclear radiation destroys, people perish, cities become rubble—all this was welcomed as new and newsworthy and artistic, as true and timely and “*must viewing*.” Then not so long thereafter, again on French television, came Yves Montand, the famous *chanteur* who used to love to sing for Stalin and Khrushchev but today, after Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, has come to see the Kremlin's designs

on Western Europe as the main danger to liberty and culture. His program also considered "a day after": the day after the Red Army moved, and the West Germans collapsed, and France got its first glimpse of the Soviet invaders, all wearing Red Army caps. French commentators rushed to put it down. This "day after" was neither timely nor true, only obvious and vulgar and propagandistic. Show a baby on the screen, painted cosmetically to suggest "nuclearization," and the point is well taken; indeed so persuasive we frenetically ask to sign the next freeze or disarmament petition—and where's the nearest demonstration *contre les américains*? Show a KGB officer rounding up a band of dissident Paris intellectuals, and you are clearly (and this is press reaction the hapless Yves Montand also got in the German newspapers I saw) a warmonger of the worst sort, out to destabilize the evil empire . . . by "nuclearizing" babies.

There is, clearly, a double standard here, a double standard of living—and of dying—with one sense of life for the peace-fighters which is considered vital and life-enhancing—and another sense of life for the freedom-fighters which is considered deadly and in mortal error.

If a seminar on moral equivalence were held in Paris today, its subject would happily sound rather out of date: a reminiscence of the futile sixties or even worse, of the dark fifties. It would have to be treated in an historical perspective . . . The intellectual and political outlook which made moral equivalence an attractive concept reached its climax at the end of the sixties and has since progressively receded. Today, if one dismisses a few eggheads in the diplomatic service and ambiguous formulas or gestures by politicians (Mitterrand included), one will not find anybody of renown expressing such views among the intellectual community which has turned into a vigilant anti-totalitarian stronghold.

*Georges Liebert
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Among the Germans there is another word for the doctrine—not "equivalence" but rather "*Äquidistanz*" (equidistance),

and I heard an editorial writer in Bonn recently ask why it was that a *Schlagfremdwort* (a foreign slogan) had to be imported for an intellectual misdemeanor which wasn't needed anyway. (*Die Welt*, Bonn, April 22, 1985, "Aufrechnung paradox" by Enno v. Loewenstern) The pretense here is that an equal amount of distance is being put between Western Germany and the two superpowers if both are equally criticized, equally mistrusted, and in the end equally rejected. Thus, the peace movement and the Greens will claim to be opposed both to the Soviet SS-20s stationed in the East and to NATO's attempt to restore a certain military balance by stationing Pershing and Cruise missiles as requested by a number of West European governments. But since there is no hope whatsoever of getting anywhere near a Soviet missile base, all the demonstrations of *Friedenskämpfer* and *Grünen* are willy-nilly against American bases. It is a rather convenient imbalance, and it doesn't happen to trouble them, nor (one might add) the Soviet general staff.

In Moscow during the recent visit of Neil Kinnock, the Labour Party leader, his wife Glenys, a very attractive and militant lady, according to a Moscow dispatch from Nigel Wade, *Daily Telegraph*, November 24, 1984, told the leaders in the Kremlin exactly what she felt about protest and nuclear arms:

I defended the position of the peace movement in the West very strongly. I made it very clear that if there were Soviet SS-20s at Greenham Common my objections would have been equally as strong as to the presence of American missiles.

This is a typical case of the astigmatism involved in the supposed equivalence of peace militancy against both of the equivalent superpowers. One wonders whether Mrs. Kinnock and her regiment of Greenham Common women think that if there were (and there would be!) Red Army guards, protecting their SS-20s at the Greenham Collective Common, they would prove themselves to be as gentle and tolerant as the Berkshire con-

stabulary has been. One suspects that the local Berkshire branch of the Kremlin's notorious psychiatric clinic might be tempted to find such dissident forms of anti-social naïveté worthy of further clinical investigation. The KGB is not exactly understanding when it comes to demonstrations in front of Red Army military bases. Mrs. Kinnock may want all peace protests to be equal, but some are clearly less equal than others; if they exist at all!

There is at work here something which Arthur Koestler once analyzed in a brilliant essay as "political neurosis." Poor Arthur would have enjoyed, in his dour, misanthropic way, the spectacle of hundreds of thousands of German youth, assorted pacifists, ecologists, progressives, and other friends of the green earth, expressing what to all intents and purposes was genuine fear and trembling at the announced installation of horrific US-made war-making weapons—but ignoring, conspicuously unafraid, the USSR's SS-20s, hundreds of them already in place, a few flying minutes away from them in Eastern bases and actually pointed at their heads! The anxiety was selective; and it can be turned on and off. When the battle on the streets and the roads into the American bases was lost, and NATO installations were accordingly reinforced, the public opinion polls registered a drop in *angst*, in anxious fearfulness among all generations. Anxiety is when a lot of people start shouting that they are afraid. Actually at that moment, as so often in the effective Western resistance to Soviet expansionism in Europe since the establishment of the NATO alliance, there was nothing to fear but self-induced fear itself.

Demonstrations come and go, and such self-generated bouts of hysteria quickly subside. But what we have to deal with here is a long-term and systematic effort to put distance between, on the verbal surface of things, both superpowers and the West Europeans; but actually there is only one measure for gauging the effective mileage: the transatlantic span, the incremental distance between America and its NATO allies, the growing apart of troubled democracies who begin to suspect each other of disloyalties to a cause which they once confidently took to be shared in common.

I would like to mention two additional instances of how the deceits of so-called "equivalence" and "*Äquidistanz*" actually form the operational code of a renewed anti-Americanism. Recently a high and diabolically clever English churchman, Dr. Jenkins, who had just been appointed Bishop of Durham—some may remember that on his investiture in the great minster of York, lightning struck at midnight and destroyed the church tower—called for a revival of Christianity through the importation of "the Theology of Liberation." Whom were the theologians supposed to liberate? The flocks of the faithful, among the Eastern European millions, who had little or no liberty to practice their religion freely? Hardly. He wanted to confront the real enemies, and (in Pogo's immortal words) "*they is us.*" We were to be liberated—the British from chronic unemployment, the French from hedonistic habits, the Germans from workaholic frenzies, the Americans from their sabre-rattling, etc.

In Germany possibly the most prominent liberation theologian is Frau Dr. Dorothea Sölle. She writes poetry, fights for women's rights (not on the Nile and the Ganges, but on the Rhine and Ruhr), and is now involved in putting distance between Reagan's America and the rest of the world. In Zurich recently the debate raged among the Swiss about whether they should broadcast her so-called "Prayer for Nicaragua." In it the Americans were said to be incendiaries (*Mord-brennern*), led by the *Präsident der Vereinigten Toten* (perhaps: the President or Prince of Death), entertaining the prospect of "massacring hundreds of thousands if and when they so decide. . . ." The Swiss were upset. They are, as is their wont, rather finicky, even stuffy, about such things. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* was appalled at Frau Sölle's remark: "*In den USA herrscht die Luege. Das ist so teuflisch wie bei Hitler.*" "In the USA it is the lie that rules, and that is as devilish as under Hitler." (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 25, 1985, p. 2.)

The editor of the famous Swiss daily newspaper could only conclude sadly: "In the days when a measure of political morality still obtained in our media somebody who uses language like that would have disqualified herself. . . ."

In my view, there is no uniquely European view of moral equivalence between the US and the Soviet Union. One thing, however, that does seem to be different about the Europeans is a different distribution along the political spectrum of people absolutely committed to Western democracy and those who, let us just say, are not absolutely enamoured of it. Here the people who don't see much to choose between the United States and the Soviet Union are on the Left—at least for now. In Europe they are on both the Left and the Right. Britain, particularly, has long been home to a kind of Tory anti-Americanism, which, to be sure, takes a different route to get there but which often comes out in the end just as impatient with democratic institutions as is the most radical Left.

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So the question, at the end, becomes what has happened to all such standards of political morality, intellectual probity, and linguistic dignity, that in so many centers of European public life—and not only there—there should have been such a fall?

In such a brief space I can barely ask all the other pertinent questions, much less offer an answer. But this is perhaps, as LBJ used to say (I trust I am not disqualifying myself by quoting him), why we're here to reason together.

1. In the first place, how important is the doctrine of moral—or, more precisely put, immoral—equivalence? If it is confined to a few English eccentricities, an example or two of French superciliousness, and a rude explosion of misdirected Teutonic bad temper, then would it not be more sensible to keep our attention focused on the main currents of Western thought and feeling? For these—let us not forget it—are, by and large, marked by a sense of transatlantic solidarity, based on a 40-year-old substratum of realistic pro-American sentiment. Or would it be complacency on our part to imagine that because "the battle of Pershing and Cruise" was handsomely won, and the only minor delay now readdressed (i.e., Holland) that the status quo of governmental alliances is solid and quite safe from destabilization by militant minorities and from Soviet subversion through a combination of propaganda and intimidation?

2. In the second place, if such a doctrine of equivalence of, or of equidistance from, the superpowers—and, as I have suggested, does work (“objectively, comrades”) on behalf of *one* superpower—if it were to move to the center of the political-diplomatic stage, and were to make decisive inroads in Western public opinion among the smaller powers, could it conceivably alter the military balance of power (as the Russians hope) or possibly even make for a reversal of alliances? Is this just painting mythical devils on the wall? Or is the behavior of, say, Prime Minister Papandreou, acting more and more as if Greece were not a member of NATO but of the Warsaw Pact, a signal of how dramatically a momentary change of mood in an electoral year can alter the basic structure of Western security and democracy’s defense priorities? Is such a change, *mutatis mutandis*, thinkable in terms of Britain where the current polling prospects of the Labour Party run ahead of Mrs. Thatcher’s government, or of Western Germany where the Social Democratic Party has moved significantly away from its old stance of pro-American Western solidarity? The vital question here is: In the absence of effective debate and refutation—and little of this exists, if London (even with its vaunted BBC) stutters, and if Washington (even in the era of the Great Communicator) is tongue-tied—then will the rude realities be sufficient to persuade, despite media distortions (which often prevent such realities from being rude enough)? I was encouraged the other day in Bonn by the following incident. A senior Soviet diplomat, who was also a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee, lost his temper in a conversation with Bonn parliamentarians. He shouted and threatened. The impact of the rudeness was direct. As one senior *Bundestag* member said: “If this is the way they talk to us when we’re members of NATO and have the Americans as our ally, imagine how they will be dealing with us if we ever decide to go it alone and hope to maintain ‘equidistance’. . . .”

But I should add a qualifier to my encouragement. In the context of the West’s sedulously self-controlled politeness, the rudeness of such rude realities has only a short half-life, and is soon conveniently forgotten or anxiously repressed. Almost none

of the Germans I spoke to seemed to be able to recall a similar incident only a few years earlier. At that time (October 1977) the rough-and-tumble character out of Moscow was Leonid Zamyatin, in charge of Soviet information. The occasion was a public meeting in Munich under friendly official Bavarian auspices. In the discussion period one listener tried to put a question in Russian to the official, prefacing his remark with a personal confession to the effect that eight members of his Russian family had perished during the October Revolution. A furious Zamyatin, sniffing the brimstone of a heretic and counter-revolutionary, immediately interrupted by shouting "I'm only sorry that you weren't the ninth! . . ."

The West German newspapers the next day reported the incident extensively, one under the headline: "Soviet Minister Says: Too Bad You're Not Dead." (*Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 12, 1977.*)

It is, as I have been hinting, extremely difficult to keep such fearful incidents in mind when, despite all the registered commitments of the East to "bury" us, to bury the West, one is called upon to relax, to coexist, to make economic deals, to build a common "security partnership."* This obviously induces a

*The phrase is widely attributed to former Chancellor Willy Brandt, and since "partners" must be friendly the old idea of a potential "Soviet enemy" is censored. As Brandt put it in his speech in Moscow in May of this year:

"In the matter of security we [Bonn and Moscow] are partners, even if each of us is playing a role in different military alliances. . . ."

Thus it is understandable when Egon Bahr, one of the leading Social Democratic military experts, dismisses the whole notion of "a Soviet threat":

"It's utter nonsense to say that the Russians threaten us." (May 20, 1983 in a *Deutschlandfunk* broadcast).

This attitude, especially since the retirement of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and the slow purge in the ranks of his SPD associates (former Defense Minister Hans Apel, among them), is progressively becoming the new viewpoint of the major West German political party of democratic-socialism which only half a century ago was strongly pro-defense, uncompromisingly anti-Communist, and consistently pro-American.

The SPD prime minister of the Saarland, Oskar Lafontaine, sounded the new note of a young militant-Left generation when he appealed recently to both superpowers to abandon the "mentality" which leads them "to stumble

"double-think" in which on one level of thought disagreeable facts are piped off to the memory-hole, and on a level of emotion and feeling an ideological schizophrenia sets in to afflict the Western public mind.

There has, accordingly, been a breakdown in the German foreign-policy consensus, and it was sharply etched in a 1985 conference of West Germany's Social Democrats. According to the controversial paper presented by Andreas von Bülow:

The security of the European peoples has since 1945 been guaranteed by the two major victorious powers of World War II, the USA and the USSR.

According to one dismayed West German critic (*Die Welt*, September 12, 1985), what should have been said was:

from crime to crime." (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, May 6, 1985). One of his party associates insists that: "The biggest NATO partner is everywhere in the world looking for war and is 'igniting' at every good opportunity. . . ." Lafontaine himself, who is often considered a future *Kanzler-kandidat*, also appears to focus one-sidedly on only one "mentality" and one set of "crimes." He writes of the Americans: "They were until now the only power that has used atomic weapons, and are currently preparing a strategy to fight and win a limited nuclear war. . . ." Further: "They are, when it comes to negotiating the restriction of atomic armaments, neither predictable nor reliable. . . ."

Thus it comes about that the "great fear" is no longer of the totalitarian imperialism in the East but of a thoughtless, mindless, dangerous ally in the West. "*Angst vor den Freunden*" was Lafontaine's key-note slogan; and it has spread anxiety in West Germany about its putative friend and ally, the USA, while at the same time arguing that there are no "enemies" in the East, only "partners," presumably predictable and reliable ones at that; and only purveyors of "*reiner Blödsinn*" (utter nonsense) could see a security threat on that horizon.

Time, then, to get out of NATO? No, says Erhard Eppler, not yet: "I am not for leaving NATO, but I consider a discussion of the question to be completely inevitable. . . ." When that time comes it may not be quite appropriate to consider an application for membership in the Warsaw Pact, but surely—and the theoreticians of the militant Left from Papandreou in Athens to Tony Benn in London would agree—a serious discussion of the question will have become by then "completely inevitable."

The USSR has occupied half of Europe, and refuses to allow the right of national self-determination to the dominated peoples. The Soviets, by dividing Germany and Europe in half, have thereby caused a political tension which led to the heavy rearmament of the two alliances in Europe. NATO and the Warsaw pact.

Half the liberal-left still believes that; and yet another half believes both that and its opposite.

3. If the doctrine of equivalence or equidistance is too handicapped, and I have suggested that it appears to be so, if it is at the moment too shady, tricky, vague, ambivalent and basically too negative in order to serve effectively as a powerful and persuasive ideology capable of disorienting Western Europe from its present course, then can it be improved? Is there a new Dr. Marcuse, or a Dr. Mabuse, on the horizon to make troublesome contradictions look like attractive consistencies? Is it possible that some *agit-prop* stratagem or ploy could, in our day of widespread ideological susceptibility, take floundering militant movements out of their present negativism and give them the energizing, vivifying delusion of a positive ideal, convincing and universal, of a "Third Camp" all of their own?

4. Finally, if such illusions were to flower and proliferate, are there enough intellectual resources in the West—in disaffected Western Europe and disoriented America—to hold the line of argument, to explain and inform and debate and (if I may use the embarrassing word) to propagandize?

Would it be letting the side down to confess one's doubts? We pay billions to maintain deterrent defenses against "an enemy" which everyone knows to be the Soviet war machine—and yet where, apart from shrinking circles in Harvard and Georgetown, and a useful research institute here or there, is the sharp, intelligent, realistic discussion of "the Russian Question" without which we flounder in superficialities of ignorant political gossip-columnists passing as pundits? One authoritative US journal (*Newsweek*, July 8, 1985) offered this bit of certain

knowledge about Gorbachev recently: "He clearly enjoys the support of most of the Soviet people."

A writer in *The New Republic* (July 29, 1985) caustically inquired whether this could possibly be the result of some *Newsweek-Pravda* public-opinion poll: indeed, whose pollsters asked a representative sample of citizens in the Moscow and Odessa telephone books? Americans these days appear to be reluctant to acknowledge that the disorientation that will divide, and may well destroy, is not necessarily abroad, among those eccentric, supercilious and ungrateful Europeans, but right there among them "at home."

If our Western (and especially our Anglo-American) effort in the war of ideas is so pitiful, how will we be able to contain in the years ahead the persistent anti-Western efforts of the weak-willed and the weak-minded from undermining a strength which may know how to deal with weapons but not with words? Is there a lingering hope for, not the SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative, but (as George Urban has proposed) the SWI, a "Strategic Words Initiative"?

Questions, always more questions, and as the famous sage said: And what kind of an answer is that? But as he went on to say, after some reflection, questions can also be a kind of answer.

Peter Berger

Gaining the Moral High Ground in the Third World

The title of my remarks, which was formulated by the organizers of this conference, has an interesting and useful ambiguity in it: Does it refer to the moral stance that we should take with regard to Third World questions in the political debates within our own countries, in North America and Western Europe? Or is the issue here the moral stance that we should take in addressing Third World people? In other words: Is my topic a moral position *on* the Third World or *in* the Third World? When I was preparing these remarks and noticed the ambiguity, I thought of calling up the Shavano Institute in order to clarify what they had in mind; I decided not to do so, because the ambiguity allows me to make my first moral point: *We should address the Third World in the same terms in which we discuss the Third World in our home countries.* Which is but another way of saying: *We should respect the Third World.*

Allow me to amplify this point by telling a personal anecdote: Early in 1981 I was asked to represent the United States in something called the United Nations Working Group on the Right to Development, an offshoot of the Human Rights Commission dealing with one particularly murky item on the so-called North/South agenda. Over an endless dinner in a Geneva restaurant (one of the very few compensations of dealing with the United Nations is that its bodies tend to meet in places where

there are good restaurants) I was explaining to the representative of a West European nation why I thought that his government was mistaken in going along with some of the positions being pushed by the Third World caucus. Finally, in some exasperation, he said: "But look, these are only words. Let us give them the words they want. We're not going to give them anything else." I disagreed, saying that words had consequences in the real world, and that his government wouldn't like those consequences any more than ours. He wasn't convinced, and then I got exasperated and said: "In any case, to agree with all this would be immoral." I'm sure that he thought of me, despite my European accent, as a typically naïve American. Let that pass: One man's naïveté is another's *realpolitik*. The moral point is this: It is profoundly demeaning to adult human beings to talk to them as if they were children. And to do so in the Third World comes dangerously close to racism.

Interestingly enough, this patronizing attitude can be found on both sides of the debate over the Third World in Western (or, if you prefer, Northern) countries. My colleague in Geneva, as he explained his views in private, was a hardboiled realist who regarded just about all of the Third World rhetoric as complete nonsense. But those on the other side, all those well-meaning "Third Worlders" in North America and Western Europe, are prepared to accept intellectual inanities out of the mouths of Third World spokesmen that they would not for a moment accept if proposed in their own societies. It is my contention that a moral stance, both *on* and *in* the Third World, begins by repudiating this double standard. I would further contend that this is also a politically productive stance, since most people (even in government) are pretty good at sensing contempt and are prone, if they can, to respond to contempt with political opposition.

The idea of moral equivalence between the United States and the Soviet Union is, I'm afraid, at least as widespread among Third World intellectuals as it is among their Western counterparts. The position that we should take against this idea should be the same, no matter whether we are stating it in Berkeley,

Berlin or Bombay. Ordinary people in most Third World countries are much less likely to find this idea appealing than university graduates. Most ordinary people in these countries know little about the Soviet Union, unless they border it, and what they know about the United States is not overwhelmingly positive. But this difference between ordinary people and the alleged cultural elite is very similar in Western countries, so that here, too, no special considerations apply for the Third World. However, there are some issues relevant to the defense of Western institutions and values that are of special interest to the Third World, and it is those that I will briefly turn to.

The moral stance that, I believe, we should take in the Third World hinges on the empirical correlation between three phenomena—democracy, capitalism and human rights. Please note the adjective “empirical”: I’m skeptical about the notion that we should preach this or that Western philosophical doctrine all around the world—partly for practical reasons (missionaries are peculiarly prone to the law of unintended consequences), partly also because I have no great faith myself in many of these philosophical doctrines (most of them derive from the Enlightenment, an event in human history for which I have only qualified enthusiasm). But people with very different philosophies, religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds agree on a number of fundamental human rights propositions—such as those that guarantee an individual’s life and property, against the arbitrary whims of rulers, his right to fair legal treatment, to protect his children against values he finds offensive, or to move freely from one place to another. When such rights are violated, it is not just Westerners or Western-educated people who feel that a basic offense has been committed against the very nature of humanity—as when human beings are wantonly massacred or tortured, when they are deprived of their livelihood or when their children are taken away from them, when courts of law do not hear their side of any case, or when they are either prevented from leaving their home locations in search of a better life or, at the other extreme, deported elsewhere against their will.

The very concept of Third World is a fallacy, a little piece of disinformation, that plays into the hands of international Marxism. The Third World, by definition, does not belong to the Western democratic sphere. It represents a non-defined third way and would not be aligned, is not involved in the universal struggle between the moral and political values of the free democratic order, on the one hand, and the values of the Soviet totalitarian order on the other. The very existence of such a notion implies ipso facto that there is a moral equivalence between the competing powers. The proposition is such that we should use this to our great advantage, that the Third World must bargain and if necessary must blackmail the West into giving it economic advantages and financial support. And even if we accept the idea of the perversity of the totalitarian model, which happens to be closer at hand, the US exercises a more subtle, economic form of imperialism, and the danger from America is therefore more pressing.

J. O. de Meira Penna

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Now, a crucially important empirical proposition is, quite simply, this: *There is a very high correlation between democracy and respect for human rights.* To be sure, violations of human rights do exist under democratic regimes; and there are, conversely, some cases in which human rights, such as those just listed, are respected by despotic governments. But both these types of cases are very rare. If you make several maps of the world, the first showing the diffusion of democratic governance and the others denoting the countries that have a good record on these fundamental human rights, you will find that there is an enormous degree of geographical overlap between the maps. The moral implication of this exercise is extraordinarily simple: If one is concerned for human rights, one must be in favor of democracy. (And, needless to say, by "democracy" I don't mean the counterfeit versions of it that even totalitarian regimes pay lip-service to, but democracy in the ordinary sense in which governments are subject to uncoerced elections and must observe the political rights conventionally associated with this process.) In the Third World, we must repudiate the notion that political

democracy is a Western idiosyncrasy, a luxury of the rich or nothing but a facade for hidden power interests. Even if democracy were all these things (which it is not), its correlation with respect for human rights would be quite enough to establish its moral superiority over any other empirically available form of government.

But there is another very important empirical proposition that is of great moral significance: *There is a very high correlation between democracy and capitalism.* Empirically, three things are very clear: All democratic regimes in the contemporary world have capitalist economies; in the Third World, there are many capitalist economies with non-democratic regimes; there is not a single case of a democratically governed socialist society. These empirical facts strongly suggest the theoretical proposition that capitalism is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for democracy. Be this as it may, the moral implication is, again, quite simple: If one is for democracy, one ought to be for capitalism. Or, to put it in different words, there is a moral warrant for the political economy we know as democratic capitalism.

But then, of course, there is that other argument, heard so much both in the Third World and in Western countries—the argument that capitalism, whatever else it may do, cannot solve the morally urgent issues of poverty and inequality. The two issues, it must be stressed, are by no means the same: The poor can get richer without thereby becoming more equal, and conversely high equality can be associated with unchanging or even worsening poverty. Yet both issues have been conveniently subsumed under a slogan especially current among Roman Catholics today, the so-called “preferential option for the poor,” which means that the condition of the poor is a key moral test for any society. Those who use the slogan, especially in the Americas, usually assume that capitalism fails the test. This assumption, speaking empirically once again, is false. Inequality is a very tricky issue, but the evidence, as I know it, strongly suggests that income inequality is the result of several processes (mostly technological and demographic) that are rooted in modernization and that operate in socialist as well as capitalist econ-

omies. Indeed, income distribution figures are surprisingly similar for all countries with similar degrees of modernization. Those who castigate capitalism for its inequality are very probably, so to speak, beating the wrong horse. If they want equality, they should think of ways of dismantling modernity; some of them (in various shades of "Green") are indeed thinking along those lines, but this particular development has little to do with the option for or against capitalism, for socialist modernity would also have to be dismantled if the goal is equality (or even a greater degree of equality).

The so-called Third World appears not as a diversity of nations with varied levels of development and widely different cultures, but rather as an undifferentiated mass of peoples and territories whose essential determination is that they are not yet irrevocably "contaminated" by capitalism, and are, besides, emotionally antagonistic to the West, they are potential recruits in the still-gathering crusade whose ultimate aim is the destruction of capitalist civilization. One obvious corollary is the alternately passionate and cynical opinion that there is an intractable historical conflict between the West and the Third World, and that, conversely, the Third World has a natural coincidence of interests with the Soviet Union.

Carlos Rangel
Author (Venezuela)

When it comes to poverty, the empirical evidence is quite clear again: *Capitalist societies have done the best job of lifting large masses of people from degrading poverty to a decent standard of living.* Not all capitalist societies, to be sure—just as not all capitalist societies are democratic. But if one compares capitalist and socialist development models, one arrives at the proposition that, if one wants to eradicate the worst kind of poverty, capitalism is by far the better bet than socialism—or, in different language, the forces of the market are safer to bet on than the forces of political allocation. A "preferential option for the poor?" I have no serious objection to the phrase (apart from the fact

that it sounds like a bad English translation of a bad Spanish translation of neo-Marxist German). I would contend, speaking morally now, that *if one is concerned for the poor, one ought to be pro-capitalist*.

If democratic capitalism is morally superior to its empirically available alternatives (I stress "empirically available," because, of course, anyone can imagine an ideal society compared to which any existent or even likely society will appear morally inferior), then one must also point out that democratic capitalism is not randomly scattered across the globe. Rather, democratic capitalism is, by and large, limited to those countries that are part of an international system dominated by the nations of North America and Western Europe. The correlation here is not perfect. India, for example, is certainly a democracy and, despite all sorts of socialist handicaps, a substantial sector of its economy (especially, and crucially, its agriculture) is run on market principles—yet it is self-consciously aloof from this Western-dominated international system. On the other hand, socialist Yugoslavia would probably have lost its independence long ago if it had not been for the implicit protection of this Western system. Still, by and large, the constellation "democratic capitalism" is precisely what association with the West has to offer the Third World. And this simple (and indeed widely recognized) act has a great moral weight in and of itself.

Dissociation from the Western system means, at best, dissociation from those dynamic economic forces that, everywhere, offer the best hope of defeating poverty and establishing humanly decent regimes. Given the realities of the contemporary world, however, worse scenarios are likely. Dissociation from the Western system may mean association, willing or unwilling, with that other international system in which the Soviet Union is the leading power. This means a dependency—both economic and political, in the full sense of *dependencia* theory—that offers very little if anything in the struggle against poverty, does not even offer greater equality, but instead brings with it the one thing that Soviet-bloc "development assistance" (if one may call it that) manages to do with enormous efficiency—namely,

the establishment of a well-functioning apparatus of repression and control on the model of the KGB. The moral issue here is crystal clear.

Third World ideology rests upon the proposition that the backwardness of the Third World, and the sporadic nature of its economic and political advances, are entirely or principally due to colonialism and dependence on the West.

Carlos Rangel
Author (Venezuela)

I have suggested that we should make these arguments, empirical as well as moral, in the same terms everywhere. What are the prospects today that they will be listened to in the Third World? I will say, cautiously, that the prospects are a little better than they were a few years ago. Insofar as we could directly address the masses of ordinary people in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the prospects would be excellent. Unfortunately, we cannot often do this. The people we normally can address, of course, constitute that small sector of the educated and the politically vocal who claim to represent the Third World in the international flow of communication. And here, I would say, there is bad news and good news, but there is more good news of late.

The bad news is that anti-Western rhetoric has been firmly institutionalized in both political and cultural structures in large areas of the Third World, and institutionalized nonsense is much more difficult to dislodge than nonsense subject only to free-floating intellectual fashions. Anti-Western *tercermundismo* (to use the term that serves as the title of a recent book by Carlos Rangel) continues because, among other reasons, it is in the vested interest of various Third World elites, whose power and privilege would suffer from the true development of their countries. The United Nations system, which is dominated by precisely those elites, has helped this process of ideological institutionalization. And the *trahison des clercs* exhibited by sec-

tors of the Western intelligentsia (as described by Norman Podhoretz and others) continues to be an important contributing factor. (Nonsense coming out of Berkeley greatly helps to perpetuate the homegrown nonsense in Bombay.) But there is also good news. I would sum it up in the title of a talk I gave in Brazil in 1983: "Word Has Gotten Around." Specifically, word has gotten around that socialism is a mirage that leads nowhere. There have been a number of events leading to this slow but, I think, steady shift in opinion. The massive failure of the Maoist experiment in China and the glittering capitalist success stories in East Asia have been two contrasting developments that have made a deep impression, especially throughout Asia. The same developments have also been noted in Africa and Latin America, and the failures of socialism on those two continents have also been taken as lessons. In Latin America, experiencing an amazing renaissance of democracy, and there is a new openness to the proposition that the West has unique human benefits to offer, economically as well as politically.

One very important difference in the moral rhetoric of the West and that of its enemies is that the latter must be based on illusions, while the moral argument for Western values and institutions has nothing whatever to fear from empirical data. I'm too much of a sociologist not to know that illusions can serve vested interests and that illusions often cling to the myths that inspire people. But facts have a force of their own. We should tell the truth in the Third World because it is morally right to do so. (In the words of Mark Twain: "When in doubt, tell the truth.") Possibly, this is one case where virtue may have its political rewards. As Sigmund Freud once put it: "The voice of reason is quiet but persistent."

Michael Novak

The World in 2010: A Moral and Political Portrait

Twenty-five years from today—in 2010—what will a moral and political portrait of the world look like? Let me first sketch a portrait of my worst fears as well as my best hopes, and, finally, my reasoned guess for the outcome.

A Worst Fear

What the moral and political shape of the world will be in 2010 depends disproportionately upon its geopolitical shape. In a sense, military power depends upon morals and ideas; in a stronger sense, morals and ideas depend upon military power. The first chapters of *The Federalist Papers* concern the need for a navy to protect the American coasts. One can imagine the tide of ideas and moral purpose that would sweep Poland and other nations if the Red Army were removed. Thus, in imagining 2010, one must first imagine the strategic balance. My worst fear is that during the next 25 years that balance will have shifted decisively in favor of the USSR.

Let me speculate about the actual array of forces in 2010, leaving it to you to imagine the course of events through which they actually occurred. In 2010, the Soviets claim as client states (marked by the presence of Soviet troops and active KGB bases

of operation) Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Syria/Lebanon. The USSR has its fingers on the neck of the Middle East. Other client states include Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. The Vietnamese, in cooperation with the USSR, control Indochina. Pakistan too has become a Soviet client state, and a Soviet fleet and airbase operate from Dacca, Bangladesh, which British military theory always regarded as the strategic hub of the Indian Ocean.

Strategically, the Red Navy commands the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean, and the Western Pacific. In resources, it commands the oil of the Middle East and the metals of Africa. In nuclear strength, the USSR has erected the world's most thorough defensive system and has a nuclear warhead stockpile five times larger than that of the US. It has solved the problem of locating US nuclear-armed submarines and has assigned "wolfpacks" to stay on the flanks of every US sub in international waters.

The world witnesses the new Soviet-style model of world domination which does not depend on armies of occupation. It works instead by controlling a majority of the world's key strategic choke points, strategic resources, and leapfrogging bases of operations. The Red Air Force and Red Navy patrol every ocean and most of the world's strategic air space. Instead of occupying territories, the USSR prefers to surround them like a boa constrictor, and—to change the metaphor—by insinuating its demands into their internal commercial systems like a tapeworm. The idea is to permit vestiges of freedom and productivity, from which the still ailing Soviet economy can suck strength for as long a period as possible.

Thus, in 2010, Western Europe has not been occupied by Soviet forces. Rather it has been pushed into "neutralism," forced to integrate its commercial life with that of Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and made to request the departure of US troops, on the other. Offenses in speech or in print against "neutralism" and "peace" receive public rebuke.

The United States is increasingly preoccupied with the defense of its southern border, which is now being fortified. There

are internationally supported claims for the return to Mexico of Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Texas. Most of the 30 million new immigrants from Central America resist this. Mexico itself, under a dictator cleverly playing to the Right and to the Left, is in turmoil.

Given this geopolitical reality, one can imagine the state of politics and morals in the international community in 2010.

In the United States, the so-called new patriotism of the 1980s issues in little more than self-deception, self-contempt, and defeat. No one wishes to fight or to exert military strength anywhere. The habit of surrender in the name of high ideals has acquired irresistible momentum. Self-doubt rules. The oceans provide a certain isolation, and the reigning strategy of the political class is to hunker down and to wait. There are brave words about resistance, but no thought of advance. There are some recriminations from those who say, "I told you so," but these are regarded as the mutterings of old men.

By 2010, it is true, the power of China has grown formidable. But the Chinese, despairing of American weakness, and too wise to challenge its far stronger neighbor, have entered into a non-aggression pact guaranteed by the highly unfavorable correlation of forces—that is to say by Soviet hegemony (a phrase no longer in use).

Internally, the USSR is more repressive but the government meets with less resistance than ever, since the force of public opinion in Western Europe and the United States has been emasculated. Its rulers rule with supreme self-confidence. As it did for thousands of years, the world has again grown accustomed to absolutism. While the economy of the USSR remains clumsy and inefficient, the morale of its officers corps is very high.

Winston Churchill said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others. But many Americans have no existential experience or existential imagination to imagine "all the others." My wife once said to a complaining neighbor, "If you talk like that, you will find

yourself in a Soviet colony." The neighbor replied, "At least I won't have to pay the medical bills for the dental work on my cats."

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All around the world, people have gotten used to a loss of liberty and do the best they can in their private lives. They ask only to be spared bloodshed and to evade attention. The Soviet ruling class has high morale. The tortoise has triumphed; the hare is confused. The quiet long-range moves of chess have paid off. The stubborn and the cynical, inexorably, have won. Dialectical materialism may be an unexciting and (literally) unbelievable theory. It may produce a drab world. But its stubborn power is undeniable. Its very oppressiveness is its strength. And for those who benefit by it, its rewards are quite handsome. Talented youngsters compete to win their way into privileged circles.

In 2010, the world is full of peace movements. Peace is on everybody's lips. There is no alternative. The world is neither red nor dead; it is slowly being bled. Religion and Western humanism have acquired a reputation for moral debility. They are regarded as ideologies of appeasement: high moral language, matched by passive acquiescence. The year 2010 marks universal submission to Pax Sovietica.

I confess that this vision may seem unremittingly Slavic in its pessimism. That does not make it inconceivable. There is, of course, an opposite possibility.

A Best Hope

In 2010, the USSR has evinced clear signs of movement away from totalitarianism, although its iron-fisted authoritarians are not yet ready to yield power to democratic institutions. Free speech is the order of the day. Russian literature crackles with fierce, extravagant, and exhilarated argument. Ukraine, Latvia,

Estonia, and Lithuania have regained partial autonomy, as have the nations of Central Europe. East Germany thrives as an autonomous German Republic, its borders open to West Germany. Trials for "crimes against the people" are still running their course against some among the former communist *nomenklatura*. Memories are still vivid of certain personalities hanging by their heels in public, being spat upon by the crowds and beaten to death by angry citizens, in the brief period before order was restored.

This Great Liberation happens rather suddenly, although in retrospect, its roots can be traced back to two men: Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. The truths they told about the slow erosion of belief in Marxist-Leninist ideology did not so much cause as express the underlying weakness of the Soviet ruling class.

If the ideology of the *nomenklatura* had been something like Hitler's National Socialism, the world would much sooner have pierced its pretenses. Its superior power lay in its supposed universal validity. Whereas Hitler glorified the Germans as a race, Marxism-Leninism glorified a party allegedly destined to speak for all of human history. This false universalism long deceived millions. It skillfully located totalitarian control within a specific organization, the Communist Party, within a specific state apparatus, the Soviet state, and justified this control by a vision of the universal unity of humankind under scientific socialism. This vision of a single world political economy shrewdly justified naked and cynical and ruthless power, in order to appeal directly to the will-to-power of ambitious activists worldwide. (The preferred dress of leaders of new socialist bloc nations has been, for decades, the military uniform.)

Next to its capacity for ideological bewitchment, the greatest strength of the socialist bloc has been its concentration of state power in a new ruling class. This concentration of political and military power gives it immense short-run tactical and strategic advantages. Power ruthlessly exercised, alas, wins human admiration, since human beings are inherently weak and know themselves to be dependent. Absolute dependence tends to cor-

rupt absolutely. Still, the Achilles' heel of the socialist political economy is its economic analysis. It does not understand the roots of economic activism. These two tendencies—a stupid understanding of economic activism and a shrewd understanding of concentrated political activism—render the Soviet political economy fatefully vulnerable.

This vulnerability takes a long time to emerge. First, the technology of the West several times allowed the Soviet economy to make advances it could not achieve on its own. Then the steady advantages accrued by the USSR from bleeding its more dynamic satellites postponed the final reckoning. Finally, the micro-electronic revolution of the late 1970s so alters the means of production and the communications base of post-modern societies that the material base of the USSR cannot survive the impact.

Ironically, the reputation of Marx rests upon his alleged insights into economic processes. Yet it was his blindness to economic reality that placed Soviet economic power upon an inadequate conceptual foundation. It is neither labor nor material processes of production that confer economic value. It is the human mind. The micro-electronic revolution "spiritualizes" the processes of production and, more importantly, of communications. Not only are these new processes invented by the creative human mind; they also render material things more and more subject to, and almost connatural with, the human mind. In an instant, micro-electronic instruments perform calculations, achieve designs, give commands, and execute actions that formerly required brute labor and long mechanical procedures. Word processors make even electric typewriters seem part of a bygone age. By the 1990s, word processors are sound-activated. More powerful means of transmission and miniaturized senders and receivers totally alter personal communications—not only of words and sounds, but of pictures.

Thus, beginning in the late 1990s, international broadcasting services transmit not only radio signals but video signals to every corner of the planet. In this new network of international communications, thought control by a central government is rendered obsolete.

The chief pillar of the power of the Soviet ruling class has been its mammoth, painstaking effort to control not only information, but the emotive and symbolic context within which information is necessarily understood. The most carefully sustained, systematic project of the Soviet ruling class has not been world domination, its declared, persistent, patient aim; it has been the Sovietization of the consciousness of the populations under its control. This has meant to diversion of massive sums of money and herculean efforts to control everything that its populations could see, hear, or imagine. No society in history ever expended so many resources to construct an entire *ethos*.

This project, for decades, has been far more successful than anyone could have anticipated. It has been spectacularly successful even in the world outside the Soviet borders. Many supposedly independent Western thinkers often describe the world in terms derived from the communications apparatus of the Soviet ruling class. This is particularly noticeable in the realm of military and foreign policy. The fact that Marxism as a way of thinking served for years as a sort of international "vulgate"—in Raymond Aron's phrase—has eased the path of this deception.

But, then, like a crack appearing slowly in a great wall, the vulnerability of this project becomes evident. The Soviet ruling class lives and acts like a ruling class. It has inflicted so many indignities and hardships upon the populations under its control that, although it can evoke sentiments of patriotism and an almost-religious system of thought, it has never succeeded in evoking love. After forty years of domination over Central Europe, from East Germany to Ukraine, and from Romania to Latvia, there is no love.

Next, worldwide evidence that liberal economic ideas—markets, incentives, personal responsibility, inventiveness, and free economic activism—achieve far greater results, both in economic efficiency and in human satisfaction, casts deepening doubts upon Marxist theories. The economic breakthroughs, first on the East Asian Rim, then in China and in India, match the constant probings of economists of Central Europe, placing increasing competitive pressure upon Soviet theoreticians. More

important, highly visible economic breakthroughs elsewhere sap the self-confidence of the ruling elites. Since patience and endurance are long-cherished virtues of the Soviet peoples, the hardships imposed by "reforms" and crackdowns within the Soviet economy are tolerated much more meekly than elsewhere. But faith in Marxist economic theory flags rapidly in other nations. Its fundamental justification lies solely in political control; it lacks economic validity.

First love fails; then faith. Finally, hope itself collapses. In Cuba, the bitter fight for succession after the death of Fidel Castro, in which at first the candidate favored by the KGB took power, ends in assassination. A Cuban nationalist, as tired as his people of feeding upon hatred and upon lies, and weary of living with losers, casts off the Soviets and awakens the natural ebullience of the Cuban people. A tide of liberal ideas sweeps through the Caribbean and Central America. The Latin Americans, who had long admired democracy, come to understand the importance of dynamic, free, inventive economies, built from the bottom-up among small entrepreneurs of commerce and industry. Like the peoples of the East Asian rim, the peoples of Central America achieve an "economic miracle," doubling their respective national wealth in 10 years, then doubling it again in five. At last, they throw over the pre-capitalist, aristocratic ethos of the large landholders, and build their economies upon the natural inventive talents of their peasants and workers, engaged now in new industry and commerce.

In Vietnam, too, the example of liberal successes in Asia become undeniable. Restlessness is evident. Guerilla war begins.

These first major retreats from the highwater marks of communist power violate the Brezhnev doctrine. For the first time, some Soviet leaders begin to feel the chill of eventual defeat. Nothing but the experience of losing—badly—could have broken their faith more tellingly. The future is no longer automatically theirs. Where hope had been invincible, doubt grows.

Finally, the micro-electronic revolution brings new means of communication into homes throughout the USSR, first among the Soviet elites, then among the people. International broad-

casters using new technologies can now beam television signals directly into the television sets of the Soviet population. For the first time, as guaranteed in the Charter of the United Nations, images of worldwide reality cross international frontiers. The war in Iran in 1991, which follows the war in Afghanistan, is the last the Soviet rulers can prevent their own populations from seeing in vivid imagery. Religious messages, economic realities, cultural fashions and debates, and a flood of active ideas now sweep through the Soviet Union. Contrary to expectation, these do not, at first, arouse restlessness or discontent. Gradually, however, they break the mold of Soviet consciousness. Soviet elites begin to be perceived, not as they wish to be perceived, but as they are.

In Poland, Solidarity moves from "socialism with a human face" to stronger and more effective demands for a new system, within which free associations of individuals can jointly create economic enterprises, independent from state control. Demands for economic autonomy grow hand-in-hand with every forward step in economic creativity and in human satisfaction.

The high levels of literacy and education in the USSR and its satellites have long borne a massive potential for free and vigorous thought. The new means of communication cause a sudden groundshift, toppling the ideal of hierarchical authority. Deprived of access to restricted information, lower level intellectual workers have previously lacked the means to question higher-ups. Carbon paper, each page given a serial number, is controlled. So are automatic copiers. But individual computer terminals, with access to stored information and empowered to communicate with other terminals, cannot be so easily controlled. After 1990, the USSR begins to experience an information explosion.

Totalitarian control is not compatible with the information society. The thought of Marx, illusory but plausible in the industrial era, loses all plausibility in the Age of Information. The ideal of state ownership collapses under a threefold insight: that ideas are the common property of humankind; that ideas must be appropriated by one mind at a time; and, that once appro-

priated, ideas become part of a person's "human capital" forever. (One might say that information theory both incorporates the basic dream of socialism and invalidates it. It affirms that ideas are subject to common ownership, but also that they are subject simultaneously to individual appropriation—and, in both instances, that ideas escape the power of the state.) In a word, the human spirit triumphs over Marxism and the Leninist state.

By 2010, the moral and political situation of the world, although the outcome is, as ever, still in doubt, illustrates the ascendancy, even in the USSR, of liberal thought. In politics, the limited state; in economics, the market and individual inventiveness; and in morals and culture, the free play of ideas—all these capture the imagination of one nation after another. The "natural system of liberty" begins to exert the natural force embodied within it. Its triumph is midwived by the technologies of communication, to which its own creative liberties have given rise.

We have had, then, a pessimistic projection and a wishful vision. What does prudent reason say?

A Reasoned Guess

The year 2010 may be the worst of times, or the best of times. Experience instructs us that it could be both. The very possibilities for the collapse of the Soviet model of political control which we here contemplate may also be visible to the ruthless Mikhail Gorbachev and his associates. Their own long-term survival as a class must elicit in their hearts a cold resolve to take countermeasures. Examining the current correlation of forces, they might prudently recognize that the USSR during the period 1986–1990 is at the apogee of its world-historical power. While they may not have the full margin of superiority that they might desire, they are not likely to gain a greater margin during the next decade. From then on, their internal decline could proceed quite rapidly. To neutralize future disadvantages, Russian character, Leninist theory, and seven decades of experience watching the United States would caution them to

move slowly but with unmistakable and chilling ruthlessness. One of the root insights of Russian experience is that fear immobilizes opponents.

In the West, we seldom invoke the power of fear. It is not one of our common experiences. In Russia, the fear of arbitrary power has been millennial. Hardly any other experience has been enacted so often and upon so large a stage as the use of fear as a potent weapon. The Czar's secret police made terror their instrument. The pogroms sought to terrorize an entire sub-population, the Jews, while teaching another, the peasants, an admonitory lesson. Marx himself was fascinated by terror. Lenin was its master. Solzhenitsyn estimates that, since Lenin's rule, 66 million citizens of the USSR have been deliberately put to death for political reasons: three times more than died at the hands of foreign enemies in World War II.

It has been alleged, although it has not been and may never be proved, that the director of the Soviet KGB, must have approved the order to assassinate Pope John Paul II. It is a thoroughly plausible suspicion since no limits can be set upon the reach of the KGB: Soviet morality sets none. Soviet morality holds that socialism must be made to triumph by any means necessary. This imperative is more than self-interested; it is said to be commanded by history itself. Meanwhile, the picture that the Soviet ruling class offers the world is that of a helpless victim, paranoid, insecure, afraid for its own borders, protecting its cubs like a frightened, cornered bear. "You should know better than to anger it," the world is admonished. Thus, the Soviets are not really challenged for their part in the downing of KAL 007, and in the murder of Major Nicholson.

The reality is otherwise. No 50-year-old member of the self-confident Soviet elite can feel other than exhilarated by a comparison between the immense rise of Soviet power between 1945 and 1985 and the relative decline of American power during that same period. The Soviet leader who was 10 years old, hungry, tattered, perhaps confused, during the cold winter of 1945, cannot help feeling pride in the economic and cultural power visible in Moscow today. Leaders from Cuba, Vietnam, Nica-

ragua, Libya and elsewhere stream in proclaiming enthusiastic solidarity, classic fealty and homage. Of course, a Soviet leader will not dwell on *economic* comparisons with the United States; or on comparisons of recipients of the Nobel Prize for science or medicine or any field of scholarship; or on comparisons in the fields of religion, the arts, or cultural achievement.

What a young Soviet leader will know today is that the Brezhnev doctrine still holds: History has so far been a one-way street. He will know that the land-locked Soviet Union of 1945 now boasts the largest blue water naval fleet in the world, operating on every ocean, and that one after another of the world's strategic check points are either already in Soviet control or within reach. He will know, better than Westerners, the penetration of the KGB into the brain tissues of entire societies, including their intelligence agencies and communications systems. He will note the power of the Soviet description of reality even in ordinary Western discourse. He will have known of Soviet reversals, errors, setbacks, even as Lenin knew them and learned from them. But he will never have known defeat. And so long as he has not known defeat, he cannot help believing that history is on his side, if only he acts with determination and icy Siberian resolve.

When a 50-year-old Soviet leader looks at the United States as objectively as he can, he will no doubt feel a certain admiration—but precisely the sort of admiration that springs from the generosity allowed by feelings of superiority. Which society is more clear-sighted about its aims? Which thinks through its long-term strategy and short-term tactics with superior discipline? Which makes best use even of less rich resources? Which is advancing, which declining? He will note that the US cannot bring itself to confront Soviet military and espionage activities near its own borders, in Cuba and in Nicaragua. He will note the moral confusion, intellectual bafflement, and public disunity throughout every circle of American life.

It is a useful exercise for Americans to place themselves inside the brain of such a man, holding with lucidity the ideology in which he has been trained in every filament of his conscious-

ness, by which he has been tested in his every word and action by watchful superiors, and through which he has found that the world confirms its premises.

Such a Soviet leader has reasons for confidence, and reasons to press advantages now. He may: (1) raise the military stakes in Nicaragua; incite a revolution within weak Costa Rica nearby, thus inspiring greater and greater confusion in the American people, and forcing a lonely White House to spend a disproportionate number of hours of strategic thinking upon problems near its own borders; (2) prepare to "rescue" Iran and Iraq from severe internal turmoil sometime between 1989–1995; (3) send armed bands into Pakistan to further encircle China—and, incidentally, perhaps succeed beyond current modest hopes.

In short, my "reasoned guess" is that over the next five years, the greatest historical expansion of Soviet power beyond the post-war boundaries of the USSR is likely to be attempted. This attempt is not likely to proceed, as in Afghanistan, through armed invasion. The capacity to inspire local revolutionaries, to lend them every support in communications, arms, and public relations, to destroy key individuals, and to intimidate others, is quite enough. Puppet governments are better than overt Soviet control. They offer markets for Soviet arms and they serve as allies on the geopolitical see-saw, adding weight to the Soviet side.

Destroy foes, reward friends, always advance—such classic doctrines work even against determined foes. They succeed mightily when one's opposition is confused.

The USSR is not a superpower. True, it enjoys superior nuclear power, useful for intimidation and for little else. (It is an instrument of terror.) True, the USSR has superior conventional power, and is poised to employ it at many places where US power is not equipped to check it. True, above all, the USSR has vastly superior "dirty" power, through its generously funded KGB and cognate terrorist networks. But none of these makes the USSR an economic superpower, such as the US (producing 22 percent of gross world product) clearly is. And the USSR is no superpower in the arts of civilization, inquiry, morality, and

beauty. Yet for those who cherish as the most basic of all powers the power to instill terror, there is only one superpower on this planet today. It is the one power whose embassies are rarely burned or bombed or fired upon. It is the one power which awakens the fears of the world. The capacity to generate fear is the single most basic attribute of the Soviet elite. It is their trump card. One must expect them to play it, again and again, between now and 2010.

The national game which sharpens the wits of the Soviet ruling class is chess. Chess trains one to think strategically, as many as 30 moves ahead. If the United States fashions a strategy for 2010, we can begin to make the moves which will lead by then to its full unfolding. If we do not, we will be responding simply ad hoc to strategic moves made by the Soviet *nomenklatura*. We will be entrusting ourselves to luck. And it is never wise to trust to luck.

The kind of political and moral landscape we shall inherit in 2010 depends disproportionately on the moral courage, clear vision, and strategic foresight shown by political elites in the United States. Our weakness is the Soviets' chief strength. In a true sense, the destiny of the world in 2010 depends more upon American political elites than upon the USSR.

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